the weekly
Standard

JUNE 1, 1998

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Smaltz's Janet Reno Problem

Add one more straw to the camel's back of evidence that Janet Reno's Justice Department has ceased to function as an independent law-enforcement agency—and now operates, instead, as a coordinated arm of the president's personal criminal-defense team. The latest example comes from PBS's *Frontline* series of investigative reports. Last week's episode, reported by correspondent Peter Boyer, profiled the experience of Donald Smaltz, the independent counsel appointed to investigate allegations of a corrupt relationship between Tyson Foods of Arkansas, the poultry firm, and former Clinton agriculture secretary Mike Espy.

In the course of his inquiry, Smaltz stumbled across someone named Joe Henrickson, who had once piloted Tyson's fleet of corporate airplanes. Henrickson told Smaltz he'd never met Mike Espy. But Henrickson also said that he had several times been instructed by Tyson executives to deliver envelopes stuffed with $100 bills to then-governor Clinton in Little Rock.

Whereupon Smaltz wrote a letter to the attorney general asking her to sanction an expansion of his jurisdiction to cover this new testimony about influence peddling. Whereupon Tyson Foods began an intensive anti-Smaltz lobbying campaign in Washington—and James Carville began smearing the independent counsel as a "liar." Whereupon Janet Reno rejected Smaltz's request and told him the Justice Department itself would investigate Henrickson's allegations about cash payoffs to Bill Clinton.

Joe Henrickson, *Frontline* further reports, has never been contacted by the Justice Department.

Clinton's Love of Labor

How far is President Clinton in the pocket of organized labor these days? More than ever, and even on small matters. Take the plan in the anti-drug bill that came up in the House last week. The idea is to let the Customs Service rotate its agents, temporarily or permanently, to stop the flow of drugs at crucial (but changing) locations on American borders. Customs officials initially endorsed the measure heartily. And why not? It was their idea. Then labor and the White House got involved, and Customs was forced to withdraw its endorsement. Labor's argument was that the rotating of agents violated the collective bargaining agreement between the Treasury Department and the National Treasury Employees Union. The dilemma at the White House was over whom to side with, a constituency group or drug fighters. But it turned out to be not much of a dilemma at all.

No Net Tax Increase!

House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Bill Archer, the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, see eye to eye on most things—but not on cutting the tax rate on capital gains to 15 percent this year. Gingrich believes the reduction from the current 20 percent would generate enough revenue to pay for eliminating the marriage penalty, at least for one year. Archer would slash the rate to zero if he had his druthers. But he and his advisers fear Gingrich is asking for trouble. Why? Well, analysts from both the Congressional Budget Office and the Joint Tax Committee calculate that the cut wouldn't raise much revenue at all, certainly not enough to offset the killing of the marriage penalty. Gingrich's response: We'll bring in some outside experts to justify the cut. Archer thinks this is too cute. Instead, he would prefer to cut other taxes this year. He and Newt do agree on the broader tax issue: Even with a possible cigarette-tax hike, there has to be a net tax cut in 1998.

Give Us Your Huddled Engineers

The American economy is currently purring along at effective full employment. That's good news, of course. But it's a problem, too, in this respect: In certain occupational categories—relatively well-paid, high-tech positions in particular—there are now more jobs available than there are American workers qualified to do them. What can American companies do to fill spot

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labor shortages like these, and thus continue contributing to economic expansion? Simple: They can hire high-skilled foreign nationals on a temporary basis.

Except when they can't. And they can't right now; federal policy won't allow it. Immigration law caps the number of work-related "H-1B" visas for high-skilled foreign nationals at 65,000 each fiscal year. Halfway through fiscal 1998, this year's quota has already been reached. If it isn't lifted, at least 30,000 U.S.-based jobs (and the production and tax revenue they would generate) will wither.

Last Monday, we're pleased to report, the Senate overwhelmingly approved a bill to correct this anomaly. The "American Competitiveness Act," proposed by Sen. Spencer Abraham of Michigan, would raise the number of visas for high-skilled workers to 95,000 annually for a period of six years, beginning immediately. Ted Kennedy and the AFL-CIO, who had sought to attach cripplingly restrictive amendments to the legislation, were beaten. And the bill passed with a resounding bipartisan 78-20 final vote.

Two days later, however, something peculiar happened to the House of Representatives' version of this bill. The Judiciary Committee reported it to the floor, complete with Kennedy-like pro-union restrictions—only worse.

And which of the committee's Democrats was able to sneak these Big Labor provisions through? None of them, actually. The culprit was the infamously immigration-phobic Lamar Smith, Republican of Texas and chairman of Judiciary's immigration subcommittee. Smith's provisions neuter the bill. Will the House leadership reverse Smith's machinations and save the Abraham bill, or does Ted Kennedy have a new set of allies in the Republican House?

A New Prize

The Scrapbook is pleased and proud to note the establishment last week of the Eric Breindel Memorial Foundation. Breindel, a distinguished columnist, editor, and Weekly Standard contributor, died suddenly in March at the age of 42. News Corporation, Breindel's employer and the corporate parent of this magazine, has made a generous initial pledge to the foundation, devoted to Breindel's memory. The foundation will administer the Eric Breindel Award for Excellence in Opinion Journalism—a $10,000 prize to be presented annually to the "columnist or editorialist whose work best reflects the spirit that animated the writings of Eric Breindel: love of country and its democratic institutions, as well as the act of bearing witness to the evils of totalitarianism."

The Breindel Foundation will accept additional donations from interested parties. Its address is 1211 Avenue of the Americas, Third Floor, New York, New York 10036. Journalists who wish to be considered should submit no more than five editorials or columns, together with a $25 entry fee, before December 31 of each year.

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Casual

You Can't Eat Alger Hiss

Last week, my daughter Faith destroyed my lexicon of ancient Greek. Playing quietly half-hidden behind an armchair, she succeeded in tearing out a surprising number of pages before I caught her, and what she didn't tear she managed to fold, spindle, and mutilate. And it's while I was prying from her fist a pulpy fragment—reading "'ετοιμος: *at hand, ready, prepared*, of food"—that I at long last grasped the fact that women are born, not made. Thirteen months old, and she already knows that one of her jobs in life is to expose the pretensions of men.

There was a time when I imagined that women were ethereal things, fed on honeydew and dwelling in a world of high romance and symbol. But wives and daughters quickly teach one the truth: It's men who live on a diet of airy, insubstantial food. Women bite to the bone.

My father used to tell of the time he was paid, in lieu of a legal fee, with an old single-engine Piper Cub standing on the tarmac of the "International Airport" of Pierre, South Dakota. And while he was telling her how wonderful it was that now the whole family would learn to fly and our vacations were going to be so much cheaper and we could go visit the grandparents in Rapid City any time we wanted, my mother carefully put on her glasses, looked up from the kitchen table, and explained, "We can't eat an airplane."

No woman I've told that story to has ever thought it funny. There's some failure in their makeup, some flaw in their gender, that seems to prevent them from helping build dream castles or joining in the construction of those extended chains of fantasy that all men love. In their hard practicality, they have trouble grasping the symbolic value of things. I would be hard pressed to justify the $17 I recently spent on a tattered copy of *The Mad Scientists' Club*, a paperback that cost 45 cents back when it was my favorite book in the third grade. In my excitement about finding the book, I showed it to one of my fellow editors, and he thought the price perfectly reasonable. But how does one convey—to those who do not already know—why the book, once seen, had to be purchased?

Fortunately my wife is a woman of some wisdom and experience, and she knows that men must occasionally be indulged in their love of the symbolic if they are to be at all sufferable. What she can't tolerate is large indulgences in symbol and myth. She never much appreciated the car I owned when we married, an MG in British racing-green that ran perhaps two weeks each month. And she's never seen what the fact that Alger Hiss once lived there adds to the over-expensive and too-small house we rented when we first moved to Washington. As I caught her explaining one day over the phone to my mother, "We can't eat Alger Hiss."

The huge, unwieldy Greek-English dictionary that Faith destroyed was another of those things more valuable as symbol than reality, easily worth the trouble of packing it up each time we moved. Part of its value was pure swank. My ancient Greek was always bad, and now—unused since graduate school—is non-existent. But as long as a copy of H.G. Liddell and Robert Scott's *Oxford Greek Lexicon* sat on the shelf, I could still pretend. (And for the occasional guest who noticed the book, the true statement, "No, I don't *really* know any Greek," could be made to sound more like modesty than honesty. After all, what kind of man would haul around a copy of Liddell & Scott if he *didn't* need it?)

In part, too, the dictionary was a symbol of times now gone, of graduate school and haunting book stores and stopping at yard sales to search through the stacks of Reader's Digest Condensed Books for an overlooked gem. I bought the Liddell & Scott while my wife was working at a foreign-language bookstore in Cambridge, Mass.—a job she quit, in her practical, hard-headed way, when she noticed that we were using her employee discount to spend more than she made.

Mostly, though, the book symbolized the future—or, more accurately, a pretense about the future: the pretense that one day I would brush up on my Greek. One day, I would settle down and actually become an educated man. One day, given time and some elbow room, I would become a genuine intellectual rather than an ink-stained wretch—learning new things not because I had to write about them but merely for their instruction and delight.

Compared with some pretensions I have had, it wasn't a difficult one to maintain. Smaller than an airplane, less expensive than Alger Hiss. But the books we don't use much are the ones on the lowest shelf, where Faith can reach them. With the instinct of a born woman, she chose a book whose value was only symbolic. And afterwards, her mother made me gather up the shredded pages to make sure she hadn't eaten any.

J. Bottum

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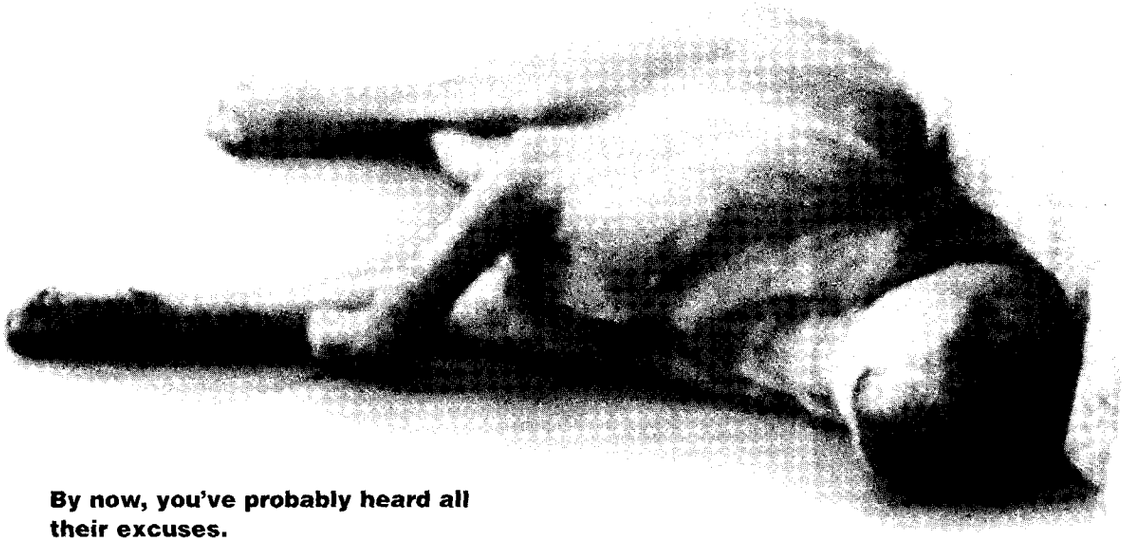
How Long Will These Sleeping Dogs Lie?



By now, you've probably heard all their excuses.

The Big Dogs, AT&T and MCI, are still howling that they can't compete in local telephone markets. It's just too difficult. It requires too much effort.

Just because they don't want to compete, doesn't mean there isn't competition.

Recently, the Federal Communications Commission held hearings in which smaller, local competitors described their success in competing against the Bell companies.

These smaller companies don't have the tens of thousands of employees that the big long distance giants do. They don't have billions of investment dollars. But they are competing.

While the big dogs are sleeping, Regional Bells are working to make competition work.

How? Local phone companies have devoted more than $4 billion and assigned over 8,000 employees to make sure competition works. They've built customized network elements; offered on-site network training and customer service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. All to connect MCI, AT&T and other competitors to local markets.

You know those big dogs. They lie around all day.

MCI and AT&T have given up on local residential service. Why? The markets are open. Smaller companies are competing. Competition is here.

MCI and AT&T are stalling competition. They only want competition on their own terms. On their own timetable. That's what their executives conceded during recent merger discussions.

Wake up big dogs. And stop all that lying around.

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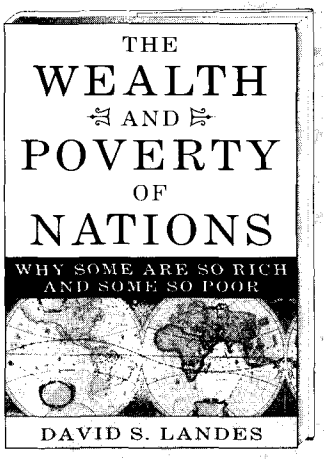

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Democrats Are the Issue

William Kristol's arguments are correct but incomplete ("Clinton Is the Issue," May 25). Clinton is an example of what the Democratic Party (of which I continue uncomfortably to be a registered member) has become.

Henry Waxman and his ilk also merit some voter attention. The obstruction, by Waxman and the Democrats on the Burton committee, of the process of obtaining information pertaining to the integrity of our electoral process, exemplifies behavior that Democrats seem to find acceptable. Uproarious indignation is feigned about items of minor significance so as to take attention away from possibly serious breaches of the law by Democratic fundraisers. This act, sadly enough, is typical of contemporary Democratic politicians.

I have difficulty explaining why I continue my registration in a party that I chose when I voted for Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Lawrence H. O'Neill
New York, NY

Say No to Needles

Bravo to The Weekly Standard for "Spins and Needles" (May 4). Your story exposing the truth about needle-exchange programs, and the fact that the Clinton Adminstration's position on these programs is not based on science, should make headlines across the nation! Let's give credit where credit is due: It is most likely that drug czar Barry McCaffrey's bold stand against NEPs caused Clinton to back down on spending federal dollars on needle giveaways to drug addicts.

As you correctly point out, there is "no conclusive scientific evidence" proving that giving out needles to drug addicts results in a decrease in HIV/AIDS and does not increase drug use. The facts are that it is irresponsible and inhumane to provide needles to addicts. It is vitally important for all Americans to learn the truth about NEPs and the *scientific* studies that indicate that these programs do much more harm than good.

As you so well point out, the truth is that this issue is not about science. Nor is it about compassion for AIDS victims. It is about politics—to appease the radical homosexual and drug lobbies. The needles-for-addicts campaign is a major strategy being pushed by those who support drug legalization and the so-called "safer" use of harmful, mind-altering drugs among addicts. Congress should heed The Weekly Standard's advice and call for a permanent and unconditional ban on federal spending on needles.

Stephanie Haynes
Drug Watch International
Alpine, TX

Recently there has been a national furor over needle handouts to addicts. Fortunately, White House drug czar Barry McCaffrey has maintained clear opposition to needle handouts. AIDS advisor Sandy Thurman, however, has pushed for national support for needle handouts.

At face value, needle handouts seem like a good idea: Give clean needles to addicts, and they won't spread AIDS. Addicts would tidy up, and exchange their dirty needles for clean ones. The only problem is that it does not work this way.

Supporters of needle handouts forget that once the needle hits the addict's arm, it becomes a dirty needle. Ample evidence exists that those formerly clean needles are shared by the addicts with others. Supporters also don't realize that the needles don't get turned in, either. And many programs give addicts needles even if they do not bring in one to exchange. An average addict injecting only six times daily would require at least 2,000 clean needles annually to cover his injecting habits. It is important to remember that needle handouts do nothing to treat the destructive drug use that sets up the addict to contract and spread AIDS.

The track record of big needle handout programs is enlightening. In Vancouver, the incidence of HIV in addicts went from 2 percent before needle handouts to 23 percent today. Two million needles are handed out each year. In Chicago, the prevalence of needle-sharing was the same between needle handout recipients and

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non-recipients. In Montreal, the conversion rate for HIV among those in the needle handout program was twice as high as those out of the program. This hardly sounds like success.

The reality is that needle handouts do not demonstrate a clear reduction in disease. They do nothing to reduce drug use, and they expose the public to dirty needles. We need to push for a national prohibition on needle handouts while simultaneously supporting aggressive outreach, treatment, and prevention efforts.

ERIC A. VOTH, M.D.
THE INTERNATIONAL
DRUG STRATEGY INSTITUTE
TOPEKA, KS

PUBLISHERS' HALCYON DAYS

Congratulations on being the first publication accurately to describe the changes taking place in the book publishing industry (Pia Nordlinger, "Keeping the Books," May 4). Whereas most of the recent articles on trade publishing have focused on the uncertain fate of the largest publishers, Nordlinger correctly describes the revolution transforming the American publishing landscape, in which most of the benefits flow to the independent publishers. While the re-emergence of trade publishing as a cottage industry has been underreported, the fact remains that superstores have miles of shelves to fill. And with increasing frequency and enthusiasm, they have been turning to independent publishers to help them get the job done. This truly is a great time to be an independent publisher.

ERIC M. KAMPMANN
MIDPOINT TRADE BOOKS
NEW YORK, NY

REPUBLIC OF DOLTS

You point out that elected officials and career bureaucrats think the public is dumb and incapable of making good policy decisions (SCRAPBOOK, May 11). Apparently, you disagree. I can only ask: What makes you so sure of the inherent wisdom of the people? After all, we get the shaft over and over again from our federal government, yet still we fail to learn. It seems to me that Bill Clinton's spin doctors assume the public's lack of mental acuity and have been proven right repeatedly. As H.L. Mencken once said: "No man ever went broke betting on the stupidity of the American people." The Washington political cadre is elitist and insulting in its thinking, but correct in its conclusions.

THOMAS P. BREEN III
SPOTSYLVANIA, VA

ELBOWS WITHOUT PHRASES

Philip Terzian's attack on Jonathan Broder of *Salon* ("The Plagiarist's Salon," May 11) is clear evidence why

neither side in the war between Clinton and the nutty Right deserves to be believed. Because *Salon* reported a damaging truth about Kenneth Starr's key witness, you try to undermine the magazine's credibility by dredging up ancient allegations that Broder is a plagiarist. This is precisely the tactic used so successfully by the Clinton crowd.

As the editor who fired Broder years ago as a result of the incidents cited, I obviously do not condone plagiarism. But while Broder has been twice accused of failing properly to attribute some information in his stories, he has never to my knowledge been accused of being wrong. Unlike some of his accusers, he has no history of biased, erroneous, or inaccurate reporting. Nor has he ever penned a line intended to obfuscate the truth, which is more than can be said of his whining, self-righteous critic, whose only obvious talent is one of piling on.

Concerning my own "famous volcanic temper" (which is about as relevant to this issue as the rest of the column), it is fired most easily by political attack dogs pretending to be journalists. Most of them write like Terzian—devoid of original thought, employing phrases without elbows and sentences without the first-person pronoun.

When it comes to truth and good journalism, which are synonymous, Broder on his worst day would be a Sunday best for you. You and the Clinton White House deserve each other.

JIM SQUIRES
LEXINGTON, KY

HURTFUL, INSENSITIVE COPS

As a working stiff who spends 4 hours on average each working day commuting 150 miles on I-95 and the Capitol Beltway from Virginia to Maryland and back, I can relate to Tucker Carlson's piece ("Postmod Squad," April 28) about traffic cops.

Carlson seems to prefer the traditional police personality over the newer philosophical edition that he has encountered recently. He doesn't have to go far to find it—just follow the Beltway around to Maryland. I was recently stopped by a Maryland state trooper on the Maryland section of the Beltway. He was barking like a stormtrooper at me and my old Chevy before I came to a stop and rolled down my window. When I suggested that it was not my car that his radar unit had detected going 79 miles-per-hour, but rather the car that had just roared past me like a rocket, he literally hissed with rage and demanded my driver's license and registration. The trooper then presented me with an enormous demand for charity for the state of Maryland.

Although Carlson did not divulge the final resolution of his New Jersey Turnpike experience with New Age policing, I can assure him that, given the alternative, he probably hasn't missed a thing.

JAMES V. BERG
FREDERICKSBURG, VA

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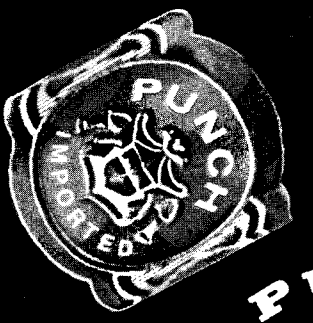

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the weekly Standard

A Scandalous Summit

Bill Clinton's China policy is a scandal. Indeed, it's three scandals in one.

We'll call the first of them "Chung-gate." This scandal is about the attempted use of foreign money to corrupt American politics. Johnny Chung has admitted to acting as a bag-man for the Chinese military-industrial complex, passing on hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Chinese military aerospace industry to the Democratic National Committee. Did Bill Clinton know at the time where the money was coming from, and did Chung's illicit contributions directly influence U.S. foreign policy? If the answer to either question is yes, then Clinton deserves to be impeached.

But even if Clinton knew nothing, Chung-gate remains a scandal. For the administration now knows what happened and still plans to do nothing about it. A year ago, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said, "If these allegations are true, they would be very serious." Well, they are true, and it's clear the administration doesn't take them very seriously. This administration is refusing to hold the Chinese government accountable for what Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan has called an "attack" by a foreign government on the American political process.

Thus the White House has scorned the reasonable demand of Newt Gingrich and 151 other House members that the president cancel the Tiananmen Square summit, planned for late June. Remember, the summit was originally scheduled for later this year, and it was expected that China would be only one among several presidential stops in Asia, including visits to close allies like Japan. But the Chinese government demanded that the summit be moved up and that China be the only country Clinton would visit. The president kowtowed to this demand. That was shameful enough. To go ahead with the Tiananmen Square summit now, in light of what we know, tells the Chinese that nothing they do will ever derail the administration's determination to appease.

To go ahead with the Tiananmen Square summit now, tells the Chinese that nothing they do will ever derail the administration's determination to appease.

The second scandal is "Commerce-gate," and it involves the broader subordination of American foreign policy to narrow commercial interests. This scandal goes beyond the Clinton administration. Last year, for example, the Republican Senate voted to okay the unlicensed sale of advanced supercomputers to China. These computers can be used to improve the reliability and accuracy of China's intercontinental ballistic missiles. Members of both parties have been all too willing, in the last few years, to elevate immediate business interests over U.S. national security and the requirements of American global leadership.

But the Clinton administration has been the worst offender. The president's decision in 1996 to transfer oversight of dual-use high-technology exports from the State Department to Commerce was the culmination of the Clinton administration's decision, in the words of former Clinton Commerce official Jeffrey Garten, to "use all its foreign-policy levers to achieve commercial goals." To reverse this selling of American foreign policy, Republicans will need to do more than document influence-peddling by Democratic donors —though they should certainly do that. They will need to take another look at their own approach to "doing business" with China. The good news is, they have made a start: The current defense-authorization bill bars further sales of certain technology to China. We would hope that Christopher

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Cox, the newly appointed chairman of the special House investigative committee, will look into all cases where "doing business" with China has done harm to U.S. national security, and will recommend policy changes to prevent further damage.

But the biggest China-related scandal of all is the most obvious and the most massive one: the Clinton administration's China policy. Let's call it "Appeasement-gate." Readers of THE WEEKLY STANDARD are familiar with our longstanding criticism of engagement with China, which has always looked to us like a fancy form of appeasement. The particular scandals we are now witnessing are the logical consequence of that policy. Every questionable sale of sensitive technology has been justified as part of this overall approach: We need to cooperate with China, the engagers say. We need to provide inducements to the Chinese so they will behave better. Administration officials have even cheerily suggested that the sale of advanced technology, which can improve China's ability to target nuclear weapons on American cities, actually enhances U.S. security by fostering Chinese cooperation on nonproliferation. That these arguments are consistently falsified by events never deters the proponents of engagement from advancing them. The policy of engagement means never having to say you're sorry.

It also means never having to say there's anything wrong with the Chinese dictatorship. In the last week alone, Clinton made the astonishing comment that "Russia and China . . . are moving to join the thriving community of free democracies." Has the president noticed that Russia is no longer a Communist dictatorship and China is? Has he noticed that Russia has free elections and a free press, or that China has not yet admitted it did anything wrong nine years ago when it drove tanks over student demonstrators in Tiananmen Square? Meanwhile, Mike McCurry responded to a suggestion that the president not go to Tiananmen Square by saying that this would be "as if someone visiting here said, Well, we don't want to be greeted on the South Lawn of the White House, even though that's where people are greeted when they arrive for a state visit." That analogy would be fine if U.S. tanks routinely ran over demonstrators on the South Lawn of the White House. McCurry went on to say that refusing to go to Tiananmen Square would be to "dis" the Chinese, and therefore contrary to "the purpose of the trip, which is to foster better relations with China." What "better relations" means, apparently, is unilateral moral disarmament by the United States.

Last week, Congress began to take steps to staunch the flow of technology to China; it has begun to undo some of the damage done by this administration's eagerness to sell anything and everything to China. But this should just be the beginning of a wholesale reversal of U.S. policy—a policy that claims to seek to change China, but that has succeeded only in corrupting us. ♦

NO THANKS TO FRED THOMPSON

by Andrew Ferguson

WHEN THE NEWS BROKE THAT Johnny Chung had told Justice Department prosecutors he did indeed funnel Chinese government money to the Democrats during the 1996 elections, Sen. John McCain pounced on the story. "I think there's a number of people that owe Fred Thompson an apology," McCain said.

So far, McCain's challenge has had only one taker, and that taker is . . . Sam Donaldson.

"May I just say a word on behalf of Senator Fred Thompson," Donaldson said on ABC's *This Week*. "He started those [campaign-finance] hearings by saying there was this [Chinese] connection, and he was much derided. Well, Senator, you're right!"

And that's it. Sam is singing solo. The rest is silence.

Under the normal rules of common courtesy—so different from the stylized and bogus etiquette of politics—Fred Thompson today would be showered with words of praise and remorse. When he opened his committee's special hearings into finance abuses of the 1996 presidential campaign, he read a statement of the kind that journalists like to call a bombshell.

The committee had seen evidence, he said, "of a plan hatched during the last election cycle by the Chinese government and designed to pour illegal money into American political campaigns. The plan had a goal: to buy access and influence in furtherance of Chinese government interests. . . . Although most discussion of the plan focuses on Congress, our investigation suggests that it affected the 1996 presidential race and state elections as well."

The committee's Democrats objected, energetically.

John Glenn, the ranking minority member, said,

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"I recall nothing to document allegations that China had done anything illegal. I read the same material and his statement goes beyond what I can say." Then Glenn added: "I refuse to play around with intelligence information loosely." (Meow.)

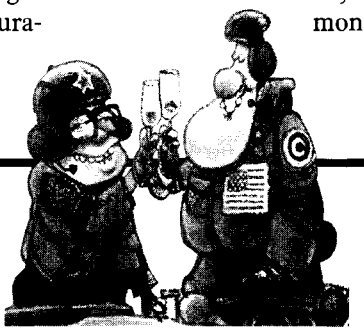
Days later, Glenn revised his view. He acknowledged that the committee had classified evidence showing a Chinese plan to infiltrate congressional and state elections, but not the presidential race. It didn't seem to matter that Thompson's statement had been reviewed, and indeed edited, by the FBI (including director Louis Freeh), the CIA, and the National Security Agency, with the clear implication that they approved Thompson's interpretation of the evidence. Glenn had his story, and he was sticking to it. And he and his colleagues stuck to it for the duration of the hearings.

As stagecraft, Thompson's opening statement was at once brilliant and disastrous. It riveted reporters' attention to the hearings, but also raised expectations that the hearings would present dispositive evidence of the plot. Thompson explicitly disavowed that intention, since it would require releasing classified material. "The great majority of information about this matter cannot be discussed further in open session," the chairman said at the end of his statement.

The committee faced the additional obstacle of dozens of witnesses who had either fled the country or refused to testify under the Fifth Amendment. When asked how the committee could continue its investigation with the most important witnesses on the lam or keeping mum, Glenn replied: "That's their problem." Meaning Republicans. To underscore the point, the minority delayed by several weeks giving immunity to witnesses who were willing to testify, and insisted on a year-end deadline that offered a further incentive for other witnesses to run out the clock in silence.

Nevertheless, over the following weeks, the Republicans on the committee managed to present a good circumstantial case for the plot's existence, with some detail about how it worked and who specifically was involved. The presentation was tedious and often slipshod, but you didn't have to be too gullible to put the picture together. Money was shown traveling from entities controlled by the Chinese government into the accounts of surrogates like John Huang and Charlie Trie. It was shown moving then into the trembling, outstretched palm of the Democratic National Committee, with the active encouragement of the Clinton White House.

The case was strong, but it was, as it had to be, circumstantial, and this allowed committee Democrats to assert that the hearings failed to do what no one had claimed they would: directly establish the mechanics of the Chinese plan. A fine illustration of the Democrats' tactic was the minority counsel Alan Baron's questioning of FBI agent Jerry Campane. Campane had detailed the transfer of money from the account of a Chinese arms merchant, known as Mr. Wu, to Charlie Trie, who then donated the money to the DNC.



When Democrats weren't dismissing evidence of Chinese intrusion into presidential fund-raising, they were ridiculing the very idea that such a plan could exist.

BARON: *Did you find any evidence that money from the Chinese government was involved in any of the transfers to Mr. Trie that you've described?*

CAMPANE: *I'm unable to say whether any of the funds that appeared to originate with Mr. Wu may have come from an earlier originating source . . .*

BARON: *I take it your answer is you did not find any affirmative evidence that established a relationship between the money that came from Mr. Wu to Mr. Trie back to the Chinese government.*

CAMPANE: *That is correct. But that kind of affirmative evidence would probably come, based upon my experience in criminal cases, from the ability to access foreign bank records. . . . The committee's authority stops at the Pacific Ocean line.*

Thus was the testimony turned on its head: Evidence of the plan was made to seem as though it proved there was no plan at all. This is the dodge of a defense counsel, not the good-faith effort of an investigative body examining a breach in national security.

When Democrats weren't dismissing evidence of Chinese intrusion into presidential fund-raising, they were ridiculing the very idea that such a plan could exist.

The first witness before the committee was former DNC finance director Richard Sullivan. To no one's surprise, he testified he'd seen no indication of the Chinese plan in his own fund-raising. Sen. Robert Torricelli pretended to be incredulous. If that was the

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best the committee's *first* witness could do, he cooed, "one can only conclude that the final witness, after we have exhausted this process, is unlikely to find China on a map." Sen. Torricelli looked very happy and tan.

Circumstantial cases are boring. Reporters like smoking guns. They want John Dean, White House taping systems, Ollie North saying of course he did it and he'd do it again if he had the chance. Sometimes, as the hearings wore on, it seemed as though nothing could make Thompson's case to his critics' satisfaction, short of a color polaroid of Chairman Mao handing over an outsized check to a grinning Bill Clinton. The press quickly lost interest, and the hearings virtually vanished from the evening news, except for the occasional story about how people weren't following the hearings—probably, of course, because they weren't seeing them on the evening news.

None of the committee's most vocal Democrats would comment on the new revelations about Johnny Chung and the Chinese plan. But Sen. Glenn was asked about the Chung story on *Face the Nation*. "I hope the Justice Department continues just as hard as they can on this thing," he said. "I want, as I did last year, to see everything come out with regard to this."

Suddenly his eyes grew misty, and a tear rolled down his chiseled cheek. "And let me say that I'm deeply, deeply sorry we didn't pursue the matter more seriously last year."

I made that last part up.

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

SMOKING BACON

by Jay Nordlinger

IT WAS A VERY STRANGE STRETCH of an already strange deposition. Ten times in a row, Ken Bacon, assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, was asked whether he took responsibility for the release of confidential information from Linda Tripp's security file. And all ten times, he answered, robotically, that he was "aware" of the release but "did nothing to stop it." Bacon at least knew his line. And he made clear that he was unwilling to take the fall for a brewing Clinton scandal.

Bacon was deposed on May 15 by Judicial Watch, the conservative public-interest group that is suing the Clinton administration for a variety of offenses. The group had already deposed Cliff Bernath, Bacon's former deputy, who swore that Bacon had instructed him to release information about Tripp to Jane Mayer, a reporter for the *New Yorker*. Mayer had learned that Tripp was arrested (on a bogus charge, it later turned out) at the age of 19. What Mayer wanted to know was how Tripp had responded to a question about prior arrests on a Pentagon security form. She called Bacon, a former colleague, to find out. Bacon then discussed the matter with Bernath. And from there, the two stories—Bacon's and Bernath's—diverge.

According to Bacon, the Privacy Act was much on his mind when Mayer reached him on the evening of March 12. Could he give her the nugget she desired? Well, that would "hinge on the Privacy Act." He would check into it and let Mayer know. The reporter was on deadline and impatient to have this final bit of evidence for her ambush of Tripp.

Then, in Bacon's version, he asked his deputy, Bernath, and one other Pentagon official to find the answers to "two questions": "One, can we get the information? and, two, If we get it, can we release it [under the law]?" He never received an answer to that second question. And he never bothered to ask again. Instead, as Bacon tells it, Bernath said, "Why don't I take it over?" Bacon at first protested, saying that he would handle the matter himself. But then, discovering a busy schedule, he relented. "I didn't see it as an instruction," said Bacon in his deposition. "[Bernath] volunteered it."

So Bernath, in Bacon's account, went off and soon returned with a copy of Tripp's employment-application form, rather than her security form. Bacon, finding this first form "not germane," said, "Maybe we can't get the information," and there let the matter drop. But Bernath persisted, in short order coming up with the specific form that Mayer had mentioned. Bernath then presented this form to Bacon, saying, "I guess we can tell [Mayer] we got the information." Bacon responded, "I guess we can." And after that? "I presume that [Bernath] told her."

But did Bacon direct him to do so? "No," according to Bacon. Then Bernath actually did it on his own? "Yes." And did Bacon suffer a twinge about the law that only hours before had so concerned him? "Looking back on it, I wish I had asked the question about the Privacy Act, but I did not." Nor did he "check with Ms. Tripp or her attorney," which "would have been better." Bernath, in Bacon's recollection, never even told him how it ended up with Mayer. Bernath did troop into Bacon's office to say, "I talked to Jane Mayer," but, otherwise, "he was very cryptic."

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Bernath, however, remembers things quite differently. He testified on April 30 that he had been under explicit orders from Bacon to satisfy Mayer's request ("Ken [Bacon] has made clear it's priority," he noted at the time). And he heard no talk about the Privacy Act or any other statute that would prohibit him from making the disclosure. As to whether he acted of his own authority, Bernath was emphatic: "I didn't do it on my own." In his mind, there was nothing the least cryptic about his performance.

Bacon himself, though, was altogether cryptic with his own boss, Secretary Bill Cohen. Preparing the secretary for a CNN appearance on March 15, Bacon said that the *New Yorker* was reporting "that Linda Tripp had lied on a security form," but neglected to tell him that the public-affairs office had fed the magazine a key part of the story. Later, Cohen was blindsided, and furious about it. At the National Press Club on March 17, he said, "The [personnel] records are supposed to be protected by the privacy rules. . . . Frankly, [the security breach] is a surprise to me. I was not aware of it."

But Cohen was still partly in the dark. Bacon had yet to divulge an essential element of the affair: his own role. On April 26, Bacon accompanied Cohen to the Fox News studio for an interview. Once on the air, Cohen said that Bernath was the one who had spilled the information about Tripp, an act that was "certainly inappropriate, if not illegal." Only after Cohen left the set—45 days after Mayer's initial phone call—did Bacon tell him that Bernath had not been exactly a lone ranger.

Bacon, a Clinton appointee, is now on the griddle, and the temperature is rising. He has been formally questioned twice: first in late April by the Pentagon's inspector general—whose report has been conspicuously slow in coming—then by Judicial Watch. In this latter session, Bacon denied speaking to anyone at the White House about Tripp's security file, either before or after the leak to Mayer. He specifically denied talking to Sidney Blumenthal, to Ann Lewis, to Mike McCurry—this despite a daily conference call, organized by the White House, with administration spokesmen. Bacon repeated this claim at a press briefing on May 21. McCurry, too, stated on the same day that Bacon had not consulted with anyone at the White House about the president's *bête noire*, Tripp.

Neither Bacon nor Bernath has implicated anyone close to Clinton, but they are hardly singing from the same hymnal. Even so, Bacon has offered Bernath—who received a handsome promotion after the episode with Mayer—some comfort: "This too shall pass," he has told him. Meaning? Meaning that "people will understand that this was not done for a trouble-making reason at all"; that "this will not end up being a problem for him or for me." And how does Bacon know that? "A hunch, more than anything else."

Bacon's hunch may be right—but it may well be wrong. The Pentagon, according to those knowledgeable in the area, is plainly guilty of violating Linda Tripp's privacy. The hit on her was evidently intended to discredit her, to demoralize her, and to ruin her government career. Will someone pay a price? Is anyone accountable? Cohen could fire Bacon, or allow him a graceful resignation. But it is still far from certain that the buck stopped with Bacon—and that it did not stop with someone more directly interested in doing a presidential irritant dirty.

Jay Nordlinger is associate editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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WHAT, ME PRESIDENT?

by Tucker Carlson

ON FRIDAY, A FEDERAL JUDGE in Washington rejected the Clinton administration's claims of "Secret Service privilege," a previously unknown legal theory that would have prevented members of the president's Secret Service detail from having to testify before the Lewinsky grand jury, even if they had information relevant to the independent counsel's criminal investigation. The White House counsel's office, as well as the Treasury and Justice departments, tried hard to keep the agents from testifying, though it's not surprising they failed.

By legal standards, Secret Service privilege was a remarkable idea, "completely unprecedented in American law," as independent counsel Kenneth Starr pointed out. But it was not the most remarkable claim the Clinton administration has made recently. Last week, the White House also declared that, although three different executive-branch legal offices had spent more than a month lobbying for Secret Service privilege, Bill Clinton had nothing to do with the effort. In this case, his spokesmen claimed, the president has been utterly disconnected from the workings of his administration.

Needless to say, a lot of people didn't believe it. But what if it was true? What if the president really didn't know what was going on? What if Bill Clinton turned out to be as detached and forgetful a leader as Ronald Reagan was always accused of being? It's not as preposterous as you might think. Spend some time reading his public statements, and Clinton begins to make Reagan look like a championship contestant on *Jeopardy*.

Consider the Clintons' trip to Africa this March. While the president's entourage was in Uganda, reporters learned that Clinton had attempted to prevent the testimony of White House aide Sidney Blumenthal by invoking executive privilege (not to be confused with the newfangled Secret Service privilege). Asked about the development at an impromptu press conference, the president looked baffled. "All I know is, I saw an article about it in the paper today," he replied, as if unaware that he is the only person in America who can invoke executive privilege and that any document doing so would bear his signature. "I don't know. You should ask someone who knows." The *Washington Post* seemed surprised by his forgetfulness—"The president responded as though he were a bystander in the controversy, rather than its central character"—but it wasn't Clinton's first brush with memory loss.

Years back, early in the 1992 presidential campaign, the candidate was asked to comment on reports that his uncle, Raymond Clinton, had pressured an Arkansas draft board to exempt him from being inducted. Clinton seemed shocked. "It's amazing to me," he said. It wasn't until the next day, when confronted with contradictory evidence, that Clinton remembered that—oh, yes—he had known about what his uncle did.

An embarrassing moment, but not the last. In the ensuing years, Clinton has forgotten all sorts of things, from meeting Paula Jones, to making fund-raising calls from the White House, to having conversations about money with his old friend David Hale. Clinton's memory seemed to get worse with time, and even when he could remember things, he sometimes seemed ignorant of what was happening around him. When the travel-office scandal exploded, for example, Clinton said he had no idea that there was an FBI investigation going on in the White House, or that his aides had ordered it. When questioned under oath about Whitewater, Clinton claimed he didn't know a thing about what Susan and Jim McDougal, his business partners, were doing with his money—had no knowledge of land they had bought, didn't know about loans they had taken out on his behalf. The president's wife, who apparently also is forgetful, said she was unaware that Jim McDougal had been

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"THE DECLINE AND FALL"

Concerned about his place in history, the president went before the board of examiners. Edward Gibbon, author of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" presided. At this particular time on duty with the board were George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Queen Victoria, Catherine the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Julius Caesar.

"Mr. President," Abraham Lincoln began, "during your administration the national economy flourished, true?"

"True, Mr. Lincoln."

"But in all honesty, Ronald Reagan and George Bush set the wheels in motion. You got a free ride. You took all the credit. That was neither fair nor honest. I cannot, therefore, plead your case for a significant place in history," said Mr. Lincoln.

"I understand; I was not forthright."

"Mr. President," said Napoleon Bonaparte, "I was the leader of the French. I headed their armed forces. You were President and Commander in Chief of the armed forces. You dodged the draft. You left your country in the lurch. I could never stand up for you because of that."

"Had I to do it over, I would not again think of myself first and my country second."

Queen Victoria confronted the President, "In all his days my husband, Albert, stood by my side. The same cannot be said of you and your wife, the first lady. There's no way, in good conscience, I could ever support you."

"I have to pay the price, your majesty."

"Sir," George Washington said to the President, "Never has there ever been a President whose closest colleagues numbered so many on the wrong side of the law. The McDougals, Webster Hubbell, Alexis Herman, Henry G. Cisneros to mention just a few. I regret to say I cannot help you."

"I have no excuses for my errors in judgment."

Julius Caesar turned to the President. "In your case, history, sad to say, will not waste time seeking out the few events that flatter you. It's much easier to chronicle your many weaknesses and worse."

"That's a hard verdict. How can I defend myself?"

Catherine the Great looked the President in his face. "In reply to my colleagues' hard charges, you have shown the traits that might well have won for you the mantle of greatness. You have only yourself to blame that it will be otherwise."

"So near and yet so far," lamented the President.

Finally, Edward Gibbon said to him, "Mr. President, a river is a river. Only God or some man himself can change its course. Your companion, down-stream, was your country on a trip through a perilous passage, fraught with violent currents, pockmarked with treacherous obstacles. You skimmed over the edge. You plunged down a dangerous cataract in a precipitous and near fatal decline and fall of you both, but for the grace of God."

"Amen," was all the President said.

"Amen indeed," echoed Edward Gibbon.

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paying off some of her personal loans. When the now-famous missing billing records suddenly appeared in the private living quarters of the White House, Mrs. Clinton explained that she had "no idea" how they got there. Neither of the Clintons seemed to know that, in the days before he died, deputy White House counsel Vince Foster, one of their closest friends, had been working on several years' worth of their overdue Whitewater tax returns.

And, speaking of friendship, the president claimed to be unaware that his friends Mack McLarty and Vernon Jordan were soliciting consulting contracts for another of his friends, Webb Hubbell, who was—again, unbeknownst to Clinton—about to be indicted.

Anything having to do with fund-raising seems to trigger the Clintons' mental block. After Charlie Trie showed up in the first lady's office with $460,000 in donations for her legal-defense fund, to name one instance, Mrs. Clinton said she didn't know how he had gotten there. In fact, though her husband had been a friend of Trie's for two decades, Mrs. Clinton claimed that she wasn't even sure who he was.

Johnny Chung? According to the Clintons, he was a complete mystery, too. Mrs. Clinton said she didn't have a clue as to why Chung was allowed into her office at the White House more than 20 times, though it probably had something to do with her over-enthusiastic staff.

"The only way I can explain it is that what they thought they were doing is being courteous," the first lady said. In 1996, the FBI heard—accurately, it turned out—that Chung was being used by the Chinese military to influence American elections. The Justice Department warned the White House about Chung, but again, the Clintons were the last to know. It wasn't until he read it in the newspaper, the president said, that he learned of Chung's connection to the Chinese government.

Then there are the little things. Like the time the president spent more than an hour getting his hair cut on the tarmac at LAX in 1993 and didn't notice that Air Force One was holding up commercial air traffic. "I'd never do that," Clinton explained later. Or the time later that year when he withdrew Lani Guinier's nomination to head the Justice Department's civil- rights division after suddenly learning—only "today," he emphasized—that Guinier had argued in favor of "proportional representation" electoral systems. It seems the president had forgotten to catch any of the scores of news accounts of Guinier's views published that month. He definitely hadn't been reading the *New York Times*, which had run stories on Guinier's support of proportional representation going back to 1985.

How forgetful is Bill Clinton? His wife gave America some indication in her first interview after the Lewinsky scandal broke. Learning about the existence of Monica Lewinsky, Mrs. Clinton told the *Today* show, had been a terrible shock, both to her "and to my husband. I mean, you know, he woke me up Wednesday morning and said, 'You're not going to believe this, but . . .' And I said, 'What is this?' And so, yeah, it came as a very big surprise. . . ."

The strange thing is, Mrs. Clinton's husband had testified under oath about Monica Lewinsky less than a week before. In just that short period, he had forgotten all about the former intern. A harmless symptom of advancing middle age? Perhaps. Or maybe there are simply too many scandals to keep track of.

Tucker Carlson is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

THE FIRST INDIAN NUKES

by Alan Jacobs

INDIA'S NUCLEAR-WEAPONS testing may have surprised many Americans—especially the CIA and the Clinton administration—but for people who remember the early history of the nuclear age there is a natural and immediate association of India with nuclear weapons. When the first mushroom cloud rose over the New Mexico desert on July 16, 1945, physicist Robert Oppenheimer cited (or so he later claimed) a passage from the great sacred book of India, the *Bhagavad-Gita*: "I am become death, the destroyer of worlds."

But Oppenheimer and his many followers in the anti-nuke movement are not the only ones to have made the link between A-bombs and India: Many Indians do so, too. The *Bhagavad-Gita*, though it is known in the West (and even in India) as a free-standing book of spiritual wisdom, is in fact a small section of the enormous ancient Indian epic the *Mahabharata*. The *Gita* is merely the record of the advice given by Krishna (an avatar of the god Vishnu) to his friend Arjuna, a great warrior who dreads

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to fight, as he is about to do, against members of his own family. In the great war that ensues, and in various battles described throughout the thousands of pages of the *Mahabharata*, many terrifying weapons are unleashed that, in the minds of some Indians, prefigure the modern age.

When the novelist V. S. Naipaul made his first visit to India in 1964, he was surprised, amused, and annoyed to find claims being made in Indian periodicals such as: "The aeroplane was known to ancient India, and the telephone, and the atom bomb: there is evidence in the Indian epics." Naipaul's hatred of his ancestral homeland (he was born and raised in Trinidad) was so visceral that he can't always be trusted. But I have since come across elsewhere the insistence that Indians, millennia ago, possessed what we now call weapons of mass destruction. Indeed, a quick search of the Web (on a good search engine "mahabharata + nuclear" will do) turns up many versions of this notion, some by Indians, some by Western aficionados of "Eastern wisdom." The favorite passage from the *Mahabharata* seems to be this:

> Gurkha, flying in his swift and powerful Vimana [the "aeroplane" Naipaul mentions], hurled against the three cities of the Vrishnis and Andhakas a single projectile charged with all the power of the universe. An incandescent column of smoke and fire, as brilliant as ten thousand suns, rose in all its splendor. It was the unknown weapon, the iron thunderbolt, a gigantic messenger of death which reduced to ashes the entire race of Vrishnis and Andhakas. The corpses were so burnt they were no longer recognizable. Hair and nails fell out. Pottery broke without cause. . . . Foodstuffs were poisoned. To escape, the warriors threw themselves in streams to wash themselves and their equipment.

WHEN THE NOVELIST V. S. NAIPAUL FIRST VISITED INDIA, HE WAS ANNOYED AT THE TALK OF ATOM BOMBS IN THE ANCIENT EPICS.

There are many other passages that "prove" the same point, though without such a close resemblance to the consequences of nuclear explosion and radioactive fallout.

It would be beside the point to note that the *Mahabharata* is not a historically reliable document and that the technological resources for making nuclear bombs were not available in 500 B.C. The argument for ancient Indian nukes assumes that these objects could be made by spiritual means, that the ability simply to *imagine* "a gigantic messenger of death" is equivalent (perhaps even superior) to the ability to construct one from metal and plutonium.

In short, the ancient Indian nukes are *symbolic* nukes: They represent the distinctive spiritual power that India considers its birthright. No wonder, then, that there was ecstasy in the streets when Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee announced the underground explosions of very real nukes. And no wonder that most of the talk emerging from the government and from the editorialists in India's major newspapers has less to do with India's security than with the establishment of India's national *stature* on the world stage. Stature, after all, is a symbolic commodity.

India is of course not the only country that engages in such figurative action; we are by now familiar enough with people around the world who think that burning an American flag constitutes victory over "American imperialism." And India is not the only poor country to seek to boost its international reputation through the pursuit of some project that has either a negligible or a negative effect on the well-being of its people. But Naipaul is probably right when he says that "symbolic action [is] the curse of India."

And there is little cause for believing that this will change any time soon. The *Mahabharata* and the other great Sanskrit epic, the *Ramayana*, remain enormously popular in India—both are retold again and again, as movie, as television show, as comic book, as radio serial—because they represent, as the title of one scholar's book has it, "the wonder that was India." To understand that phrase, one must note particularly its tense: The wonder long since lost, through conquest by Muslims and Englishmen, is to be recovered by the detonation of nuclear weapons in the desert. Vajpayee has used just such language, contending that if India needs any sanction for its actions, "India has the sanction of her own past glory."

Vajpayee has further claimed that "the greatest meaning of the tests is they have given India *shakti*, they have given India strength, they have given India self-confidence." *Shakti* is an age-old Sanskrit word meaning "energy" or "power"—appropriately enough in this context, though again the energy referred to was originally spiritual—but Shakti is also personified as a goddess. Indeed, in some myths she is the consort of the great god Shiva, also known as the destroyer: the destroyer of worlds.

Alan Jacobs is associate professor of English at Wheaton College.

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Improper Nouns

by Eric Felten

When the NAACP—outraged that Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines the word "nigger" as "a black person"—threatened last year to boycott Webster's dictionaries, it was hardly the first time the company had heard from angry readers: Merriam-Webster is always getting complaints.

On any given day, letters arrive from unhappy parents whose precocious little angels think the dictionary gives them license to spout scatological slang; schoolmarms write to object that the dictionary includes a variety of unmentionable terms for naughty bits; spinsters are disappointed about "old maid"; members of racial and ethnic minorities are livid at the inclusion of racial slurs; and, who knows, the *New York Times* is probably bent out of shape to find "scumbag" in print. Complaints are an inescapable part of the dictionary business: As long as there are ugly words, people will blame lexicographers. Usually Merriam-Webster dismisses complaints with a pleasant, if patronizing, form letter describing how and why words get into the dictionary. But faced with an NAACP boycott, the company decided it was high time they changed their treatment of offensive words. That's when the trouble really started.

The tempest was sparked by an Ypsilanti, Mich., computer technician, Delphine Abraham, who is black. Shocked to find the n-word in her dictionary, she complained to Merriam-Webster. But this being the computer age, she leveraged her own anger with an e-mail petition drive. When *Emerge* magazine featured Abraham, the complaints started to pile up. Merriam-Webster stood firm: "We have made it clear that the use of this word as a racial slur is abhorrent to us, but it is nonetheless part of the language, and as such, it is our duty as dictionary makers to report on it."

Which isn't to say the company wasn't willing to pander a bit—the statement continued, "To do less would simply mislead people by creating the false impression that racial slurs are no longer a part of our culture; and that, tragically, is not the case."

The flap caught the attention of Kweisi Mfume, the publicity-savvy president of the NAACP. He quickly appropriated the cause and Abraham's letter-writing campaign; soon he was issuing demands and making threats. Merriam-Webster decided to cave in—or rather, the company impaneled a committee to determine how best to cave in. Last fall, Merriam-Webster convened a multicultural group of in-house experts and outside consultants to determine whether, and how, to change the way it describes a wide range of opprobrious slang and other vulgarities. The company announced with much hoo-ha that the panel's recommendations would shape the new edition of the Collegiate Dictionary. The NAACP was placated; newspaper columnist William Raspberry declared "a small victory."

But now that the recommendations are in, Merriam-Webster is learning the price of political appeasement. It doesn't matter that the new definition of the n-word sets off more alarms than a clumsy Fort Knox heist. It doesn't matter that, before a definition is given, readers are pointed to this warning about the word's usage: "the most offensive and inflammatory racial slur in English." Mfume is not satisfied. He is so unhappy with Merriam-Webster that a boycott is no longer enough: Two weeks ago Mfume announced ominously that the NAACP will investigate the corporate structure and hiring practices at the company. "I'm convinced there may be something in their corporate structure that would not allow them to understand how grossly offensive that definition is," Mfume told the *Washington Post*.

Could it be Mfume is peeved because Merriam-Webster didn't just take out the n-word altogether? That would be too easy. Mfume wants something more extraordinary than mere excision, and his demand has left the language mavens at a loss. Mfume wants Webster's to invent a new part of speech, the racial slur. "Our problem with Merriam-Webster had to do with specifically the fact that they used and described 'nigger' as a noun synonymous with a black person," Mfume said. "We believe it is a racial slur, not a noun."

The notion that the n-word is not a noun seems to have originated with Abraham. Reached in Ypsilanti, she says "'Nigger' isn't a noun, because it isn't a person; it's a slur-word." Abraham continues: "If 'nigger' is a noun for a black person, then you could look up 'a black person' and the definition would be 'nigger.'" But if the offending word isn't a noun, then what part of speech would Abraham have it be? "A derogatory term used to dehumanize a group or race of people."

Grammarians that they are, the folks at Merriam-Webster draw the line here. Even improper nouns are nouns. "The dictionary is descriptive, not prescriptive," aphorizes company spokesman Deborah Burns. Thus, they will stick with the new committee-created format for the 200-some words that the company deems offensive. Interestingly, Burns refuses to

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provide a comprehensive list of verboten slang. Interesting, because it suggests that Merriam-Webster's front office is finally getting wise. If Mfume is steamed about the n-word, how happy would he be to learn that Webster's New International Dictionary includes these additional slur-words for blacks: "smoke," "jigaboo," "spade," and "boogie"? You can't blame Merriam-Webster for not wanting to add fuel to the book-burning.

Not that it's the words that really matter: If previous NAACP pressure campaigns are any indication, Mfume won't be satisfied even if Merriam-Webster does invent a new part of speech for him. When it comes to atonement, it's cash settlements and lucrative, long-term sensitivity-training contracts that the NAACP most respects.

Don't be surprised if, as a result of the company's experience, Merriam-Webster discovers a new verb—"to Texaco."

Eric Felten, a Washington writer, has just finished his first novel.

ALMS FOR THE LAWYERS

by William S. Armistead

ON MAY 19, 58 SENATORS voted against an amendment that would have paid trial lawyers $250 an hour, plus expenses, for all the work they've done against tobacco companies. If the lawyers had been working full time, that would have meant half a million per year—or $2.5 million for each lawyer, for five years of work. In other words, righteous bucks.

So what was the problem with the $250-an-hour deal? The 58 senators didn't think it was *enough*. It turns out that the trial lawyers want $20 billion in taxpayer dollars, and these senators want to give it to them. When the amendment to set the fees at $250 was introduced by Sen. Lauch Faircloth, Republican of North Carolina, a visibly excited Sen. Richard Durbin, Democrat of Illinois, took to the floor, arguing that $250 an hour was more punishment than payment.

According to Durbin, a mere $250 an hour would be an insult to the lawyers. "Were it not for these attorneys, these tobacco companies would continue to make billions of dollars, would continue to exploit our children, would continue to be the number-one preventable cause of death in America month after month, year after year, decade after decade," the senator admonished.

True, there are some who see the trial lawyers as heroes for bringing down Big Tobacco. But others see them simply as lawyers out to make a buck, ones who

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might just as soon have worked *for* Big Tobacco, so long as they could have cashed their $20 billion ticket at the end of the day. Durbin wants us to think of the trial lawyers as both—but that's not really possible.

If the trial lawyers are heroes, by all means let's treat them as such. Let's suppose for a moment they have bravely saved our children and therefore deserve to be held up right alongside Congressional Medal of Honor winners. Really big heroes. Do we normally give money to heroes? Aren't heroes the ones who refuse rewards, saying they acted (to save the children in this case) because they thought it was for the good of the country? Money only cheapens a hero's motivation and triumph. So, if the trial lawyers are heroes, they ought to be given full honors by Congress and the president. Maybe Dick Durbin could declare a "Trial Lawyer's Day." Americans would then take time out to contemplate just how much we owe to those who sacrificed so much that our children might breathe free. Congress could commission a Trial Lawyer's Memorial—perhaps something like the Iwo Jima Memorial, though in this case the heroes could be planting a stake in the heart of a tobacco executive.

If, however, the trial lawyers are only lawyers, let's treat them that way—as regular guys who schlepped to court against tobacco companies on behalf of individual clients who hired them on contingency. And let's, just for the sake of argument, say that they were getting nowhere fast with juries until one day they got hired (again, for a percentage of the take) by the state of Florida. And then, their client, the state of Florida, passed a law (they can do that since they're the government) stripping the tobacco companies of their affirmative defenses in court, making it virtually impossible for the trial lawyers to lose. Now that's a good day at the office!

As for the tobacco companies, once they saw this brick loaded onto the scales of justice, they predictably started scrambling for a settlement. The payoff for the state government was huge, about $12 billion, and the trial lawyers were set to get almost $3 billion of that. When this tag-team effort was repeated in other states and then brought to Washington, D.C., the take for government was over $350 billion, and the trial lawyers were set to take in at least $20 billion for themselves. Cha-ching! What a ride.

Unfortunately for the trial lawyers, however, the big settlement was hijacked by politicians who wanted that money for themselves and their pet federal programs. So the state-based global settlement collapsed. Without the consent of all parties to the settlement—as was achieved in Florida, Texas, and Mississippi—or a victory in court, the trial lawyers have nothing coming to them. They can go back to court at the state level or they can ask Congress for relief, but they took their chances on a jackpot and lost out to an even greedier, cleverer bunch—our elected officials in Washington. Viewed as mere mortals, the trial lawyers overreached, mishandled the endgame, and lost.

So there we are. If the trial lawyers aren't heroes, but only lawyers, let's be fair—even generous—and pay them for their lawyering. It's a pretty lucrative profession. They'll do well. The typical lawyer in America earns about $150 an hour. The real hotshots (like the president's lawyers) get $400 an hour. Why not split the difference and go with Sen. Faircloth's $250? It makes sense—unless, of course, you're in the hero camp, in which case let's press medals, carve statues, and put away all such vulgar talk of money.

William S. Armistead is a vice president of Citizens for a Sound Economy.

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SELLING CHINA THE ROPE . . .

Clinton Didn't Start It, But He Sure Made It Worse

By Henry Sokolski

Presidential spokesman Mike McCurry last week justified the Clinton administration policy that allowed the transfer of satellite technology to the Chinese military with the hoary "they started it" defense. "This administration," said McCurry, "has pursued the exact same policy pursued by the Bush administration."

This is not really a defense of the policy, of course, but is it true? Republican officials, as we shall see, were not without sin. But you might say that they worried enough to go to confession: They tried to control against the leaking of sensitive technology in their dealings with China by at least monitoring and limiting the transactions. Not so the Clinton administration, which from 1993 on not only showed contempt for enforcing existing satellite controls but loosened them so as to make it all but impossible to know whether they were being violated. You might say they not only skipped confession, but burned the church down.

Focusing on money is exciting, but probably misses the point when it comes to assessing the potential damage done to national security.

Today's controversy surrounds what the Chinese have managed to learn through launching satellites made by two American companies, Loral Space and Communications and Hughes Electronics. Details of a federal grand-jury investigation have been leaked to *New York Times* reporter Jeff Gerth and others that make this much clear: In February 1996 a Chinese Long March rocket carrying a Loral-made satellite blew up shortly after liftoff. In an effort to clarify to insurers who was to blame for this accident, analysis done by Loral and Hughes was presented to the Chinese, which the U.S. Defense Department later determined could help China perfect more reliable, accurate, long-range ballistic missiles. (According to a CIA report leaked this spring, 13 Long March missiles with nuclear warheads are aimed at American cities.) The federal grand jury is now trying to determine what, if any, U.S. export-control laws may have been broken.

This story has exploded because of the tandem revelations that the Chinese military may have made illegal campaign donations to aid Clinton's reelection and that Loral's CEO is a top donor to the Democratic party. Despite Justice Department warnings that he might undermine the grand-jury investigation of Loral, the president went ahead earlier this year and allowed the company to transfer an additional satellite to China. Eager to connect the dots of the scandal, the House last week voted 364 to 54 to suspend all transfers of U.S. satellites to China.

Focusing on the money is exciting, but probably misses the point when it comes to assessing the potential damage done to national security. In fact, not just Loral and Hughes, but Lockheed Martin, Motorola, and Martin Marietta have all worked closely with the Chinese launch industry—work which began not in 1996, but nearly a decade ago in 1989. And all of this history (not just the 1996 Loral-Hughes case) bears investigating. There is no way to judge the administra-

Henry Sokolski, executive director of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, was the top official for nonproliferation issues in the Bush Defense Department.

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tion's performance in the Loral-Hughes matter without knowing what was attempted by prior administrations.

It was Ronald Reagan, after all, who first allowed the launch of U.S.-made satellites on Chinese rockets, after the *Challenger* space shuttle crash in 1986 deprived the satellite industry of launch alternatives. And it was George Bush who waived Tiananmen Square sanctions to allow the Chinese launch of up to five U.S.-made satellites, three of which—all made by Hughes—were launched before he left office.

If this larger record is examined, three points emerge. First, *all* of our satellite transfers have helped China perfect its military rocketry. China's launching of U.S.-made satellites—worth up to a half-billion dollars in revenue to date—has helped finance China's own missile-modernization efforts and missile exports to nations like Pakistan and Iran. It also has given the Chinese access to U.S. rocket know-how. U.S. contractors have a natural inclination to tutor the Chinese on what they should do to make their crude rockets precise and reliable (they don't want to lose their satellites, which are worth up to 10 times the value of the launcher). Anticipating this, State and Defense officials drew up strict rules in the late 1980s covering precisely what information companies could share with the Chinese. These rules required monitoring of all contractor-Chinese exchanges (including discussions) by a U.S. government rocket-engineer enforcement agent.

Did this prevent militarily useful information from being conveyed to the Chinese? No. But because all exchanges were monitored, there was a clear record of what was conveyed and a concerted effort to keep such transfers to a minimum. Were there infractions? Yes, but when they were reported, senior officials in the Defense and State departments reprimanded the contractors and got them to stop. Yet despite these enforcement measures, a number of key technologies were transferred before 1993. Clean-rooms were constructed in China to assure Hughes's sensitive communications satellites wouldn't be ruined by dust, humidity, or major temperature changes before they were launched. And clean-room technology, as it happens, is also crucial in preparing any advanced system for launch, including reconnaissance satellites and complex warhead packages.

In an attempt to clear up liability for two launch failures in 1992, U.S. contractors also discussed how to improve Chinese payload farings (the nose cone at the rocket's top that shields the satellite) and attitude and engine controls, which fire the rocket's stages and keep them and the payload (either military or civilian) at the precise angles required for proper functioning. Finally, each launch of a Chinese Long March vehicle helped improve the reliability of China's intercontinental ballistic missile fleet, since the rockets are the same.

Republican officials, then, had a spotty record, with the advantage that they worried about it and tried to enforce the law. By the end of the Bush administration, proposals were made to loosen controls over satellite transfers. Whether they would have succeeded no one can know, because the 1992 elections intervened.

The industry, however, correctly sensed that with Clinton's election the time for pushing for decontrol was ripe. Their first step came in late 1993 when they asked the Commerce Department to persuade the White House to drop government monitoring of contractors' discussions with the Chinese. They wanted to share, unimpeded by monitors, a key technology known as "coupling load analysis." The crude Chinese rockets were originally designed to be so rigid that vibration from the rocket's separating stages and engines risked shattering delicate satellites of the sort the U.S. companies would want to launch (and the Chinese would want to develop later on their own). Using coupling load analysis, the Chinese could "soften" their launchers, allowing them to carry more sensitive payloads—be it satellites or the latest in highly accurate, multiple-warhead systems.

The space industry was so eager to share this technology, it lobbied Congress and the executive branch throughout 1993 to be given a free hand to do so. Meanwhile, government monitors continued to file compliance reports on a host of issues. Now, however, their concerns were handled differently: Where before senior State and Defense officials took action, now little or nothing happened. Word got out: Increasingly, industry officials disobeyed government guidance, shared their know-how with the Chinese, and discovered that contempt for the law paid off.

By 1995, the satellites being launched by the Chinese were more sophisticated. One of these, AsiaSat 2, a communications satellite made by Martin Marietta, was to be placed in its orbit with a Chinese solid-rocket kick motor—a final rocket stage strapped to the satellite itself. This kick motor's propellant had to be configured with extreme precision to ensure that it would propel the satellite to an exact point in space and no further and that it would do so without shattering the satellite through vibration or jolts of acceleration.

Martin Marietta and its Hong Kong customers were concerned that the Chinese kick motor might not

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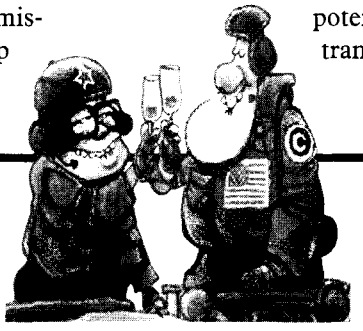
be capable of such precision. They asked State if they could witness a Chinese test-firing of the motor. Their wish was granted. What's unknown is what, if anything, was then said to the Chinese engineers by the company's foreign staff, who are not bound by U.S. restrictions. Were they briefed by the contractor? Did they speak with the Chinese or otherwise convey U.S. solid-rocket propulsion know-how? We don't know. Why might it matter? Perfecting kick motors can also help in China's development of a warhead-delivery system known among experts as a "post-boost vehicle"—which is designed to penetrate missile defenses. Boosting a satellite up into a precise position in space with a kick motor is little different from blasting warheads off their predictable course down through space and the atmosphere.

The good news in this case is we may have a clue whether this technology was leaked: Industry's campaign to do away with monitoring didn't fully bear fruit until 1996. In 1995, U.S. law still required government monitoring agents, and compliance reports were still being filed. This paper trail and government monitoring work didn't grind to a halt until 1996. That's when President Clinton quietly removed virtually all commercial satellites and related technology from State Department munitions controls (which required official monitors). The responsibility was transferred to the Commerce Department, which (no surprise) trusts industry to monitor itself.



What's unknown is what, if anything, was said to the Chinese engineers. Were they somehow able to learn about U.S. solid-rocket propulsion know-how?

In his defense of the Clinton policy last week, Mike McCurry cited this transfer to Commerce as the one change that distinguished the Clinton administration's policy from Bush administration practices. But the transfer to Commerce was no simple "change." It was tantamount to a complete overthrow of the old export-control regime.

It was under Commerce "controls" that Motorola and Lockheed worked with the Chinese to launch a series of small communications satellites known as Iridium. Two of these satellites at a time were successfully launched on a Long March rocket with a multiple-satellite dispenser of Chinese design. A host of issues about the satellite dispenser were somehow addressed—from proper mounting and release of the satellites to coupling load analysis and attitude control. And all were resolved. The result? China now has mastered a technology virtually interchangeable with that of multiple independently targetable warhead vehicles (MIRV), a delivery system used on America's most advanced intercontinental ballistic missiles. Indeed, the MIRV system that our military uses today was borrowed from dispensers that the commercial-satellite industry first developed.

One could go into greater detail on the potential military significance of our satellite transfers to China. But this much is already abundantly clear: Our national security demands that Congress learn all the facts. This will require going beyond the narrow legal question of whether Loral and Hughes broke the law in 1996. Indeed, allegations of influence peddling by the Chinese and the contractors should not divert attention from the crucial questions raised by a decade of U.S. satellite commerce with China.

Among them are these: Have we already given the Chinese everything of value (in which case, continued satellite commerce could hardly do much harm)? Or is there more that they need or want that we should control and protect? What, if anything, should be done to improve enforcement of controls and assure effective executive-branch backing? Finally, is the spread of missile technology so tied up in the transfer of satellites that we delude ourselves in trying to control their transfer? Would it make more sense to accept this connection and expand such trade, or in the case of China, cut it off entirely?

To get at these questions, Congress will have to hold its own hearings—but it will need the time and depth and expertise that can only come with the creation of an independent commission. The commission and Congress, moreover, are unlikely to get anywhere if U.S. contractors are unwilling to speak freely. Only they know what has actually been transferred to the Chinese since 1996. To encourage them to be forthcoming, Congress and the executive branch should grant contractors immunity from prosecution. Meantime, a moratorium should be placed on further transfers of satellites to China until the commission and

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Congress get the answers they need. This will hurt industry only to the extent that it drags its heels in providing information about past transfers.

Certainly, given the seriousness of these matters, it would be shortsighted of Congress to focus exclusively on the political and legal issues surrounding the 1996 Loral case. There is, after all, a broader set of concerns at stake. The president is duty bound to provide for the common defense. Not until we know the truth about the U.S. role in China's missile program can we know whether the Clinton administration has met this most basic obligation. ♦

CLINTON'S CHINA COMMERCE

Where Today's Customers Are Tomorrow's Adversaries

By Matthew Rees

The Clinton administration made a fateful decision in 1996 to put the Commerce Department in charge of overseeing exports of American satellite technology. Under fire now for transferring this weighty responsibility from the more security-conscious State Department, the administration insists the decision had nothing to do with campaign contributions from eager exporters. Instead, say the president's spokesmen, the transfer was just the outcome of a "bureaucratic squabble."

Whatever role donations may have played in strengthening Commerce's hand, allowing that department to license militarily sensitive goods for export was no garden-variety Washington turf battle. It was the equivalent of decontrolling such exports entirely. The current congressional investigations of technology transfers to the Chinese military would not be taking place if, over the past five years, the administration had not given Commerce unprecedented power to promote American technology sales abroad, with dangerously little attention paid to how these exports can contribute to nuclear proliferation, threaten the supremacy of the U.S. military, and undermine America's national security.

The decontrolling mentality of the Commerce Department is exemplified by William Reinsch, who heads the department's Bureau of Export Administration. This is where American companies go if they want to sell sensitive products, like supercomputers, in foreign countries. The bureau's role is both to stop exports that might compromise national security and to help guarantee that the sensitive products it does approve for sale abroad don't end up in the hands of untrustworthy governments.

But Reinsch has effectively made the bureau a servant of Commerce's central mission: unbridled export promotion. His motto is "Yesterday's adversaries are today's customers." This mentality has led Commerce to minimize the danger of sharing sensitive technology with countries like China. The Pentagon concluded last year that "United States national security has been harmed" by the assistance American aerospace companies have provided to China. Nonetheless, Reinsch was apoplectic when the House overwhelmingly voted on May 20 to block further exports of U.S. satellites to China: "We're talking about the potential loss of major contracts," he whined to the *Wall Street Journal*. "It could really complicate people's lives."

The controversy over the transfer of technology to China is but one outgrowth of Commerce's policy of giving American high-technology companies unprecedented freedom to sell their products in foreign markets. Another startling illustration of the fervor with which Commerce promotes the sale of even the most sensitive exports came early in 1996. According to Gary Milhollin, of the Washington-based Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, that's when U.S. government nuclear experts asked Commerce to provide American computer companies with a list of nuclear laboratories in Russia and China. The goal was to prevent the companies from selling their high-performance supercomputers to these laboratories, which the companies might not otherwise know to be in the nuclear business. But Commerce officials refused to

Matthew Rees is a staff writer for THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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provide such a list, claiming U.S. policy prevented them from sharing such information.

While Commerce aggressively pushed exports in the Reagan and Bush administrations, it had not yet triumphed over its bureaucratic rivals elsewhere in the executive branch, who acted as a brake on Commerce's salesmanship. The Defense Department, notably, would frequently challenge export licenses that posed a potential threat to America's strategic position. But a further sign of Commerce's ascendancy in the Clinton administration is that the Pentagon, too, has become an enthusiastic partner in promoting the sale of American goods in overseas markets. (Reinsch said in an interview last November that relations between Commerce and the Pentagon are "the best they've been in 20 years.") This is not just a matter of politically savvy defense officials' knowing which way the wind is blowing. An array of these officials appointed to senior positions by the president—William Perry, Ashton Carter, Mitch Wallerstein, Ken Flamm, to cite a few—had made names for themselves as longtime supporters of easing export controls.

A key official is Peter Leitner, a 12-year veteran of the Pentagon office that oversees export controls. He notes that the Defense Department now instructs its employees to side with Commerce in interagency debates over export controls. In congressional testimony last year, Leitner observed that "this bizarre role change finds the State Department at times in the farcical position of being the lone agency making the national security case and opposing liberalization positions from DoD."

Despite their generally pro-export posture, State and Defense still had reservations about transferring responsibility for licensing the export of satellite technology to Commerce. And their reservations were justified: For items under State's jurisdiction, the decision to grant an export license is supposed to be based only on national security. Moreover, Congress must be notified 30 days in advance of an export. By contrast, Commerce is *mandated* to weigh commercial and economic interests, and it is not required to notify Congress of its decisions. With communications satellites costing upwards of $100 million, it's easy to see how commercial concerns would tip the scales away from export controls.

When Clinton announced the transfer of licensing responsibility on March 14, 1996, Commerce officials—who had lobbied hard to be given licensing responsibility—were thrilled. The *New York Times* reported that an e-mail was circulated at Commerce announcing "good news" but warning recipients not to publicize the decision in a way that would "draw attention" to it. Clinton officials did their best to bury the news by not publishing the new rules in the Federal Register until Election Day 1996. The strategy worked: One of the most important national-security decisions made in Clinton's first term received scant attention during his reelection campaign from Congress and the press.

While Commerce aggressively pushed exports in the Reagan and Bush administrations, it had not yet triumphed over its bureaucratic rivals.

Satellites weren't the only technology transferred from State to Commerce two years ago. Clinton also took something known as "hot section" technology off the State Department's munitions list and empowered Commerce to license such exports. Hot-section technology boosts the performance and durability of fighter jets. Steve Bryen, who oversaw export controls in the Reagan administration, says this technology is so sensitive that in previous administrations it wasn't even shared with allies like the French and the Germans.

During the internal debate over transferring hot-section jurisdiction from State to Commerce, some Clinton administration officials raised questions about whether America's national security would be compromised and whether it might reduce the combat advantage of U.S. aircraft. But Commerce officials argued it would be impossible for the technology to be used by foreign manufacturers in such a way that U.S. military power could ever be equaled or surpassed. To the amazement of many Pentagon officials, this argument prevailed and responsibility for licensing exports of the technology was handed from State to Commerce.

Commerce officials have gone to extraordinary lengths to circumvent even the most modest restraints placed on them. Last year, Congress

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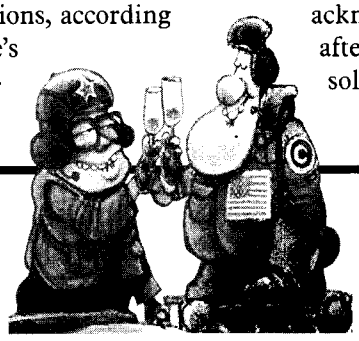
approved a measure requiring American computer companies exporting to countries believed to pose a proliferation risk (that is, Russia and China) to give the executive branch 10 days' notice to determine whether a proposed supercomputer export requires an individual license. The measure also requires that, once supercomputers have been licensed and shipped to countries of proliferation concern, U.S. government officials must check whether the buyers are using the computers as promised.

Yet Commerce has made a "deliberate effort to circumvent" the post-shipment verifications, according to Milhollin. Indeed, under Commerce's interpretation, in order for the government to block an export, only the most senior cabinet officials—undersecretaries or higher—are permitted to intervene. This prompted David Tarbell, who heads the Pentagon agency that monitors export controls, to warn in an internal memo that the National Security Council and Commerce were using the undersecretary requirement to "ensure that no (or very few) objections would ever be received." Tarbell's complaint is echoed by three Senate Democrats, and 10 Republicans, who have sent the president a letter asking for the law to be enforced.



What has the Clinton administration learned about the pitfalls of a permissive export-control policy? Apparently nothing.

There was a very precise reason Congress required the regulations: It had become disturbingly clear that Commerce had little clue about the ultimate destination of an extremely sensitive product—supercomputers. Silicon Graphics, for example, has acknowledged having sold four supercomputers to one of Russia's premier nuclear-weapons design laboratories, Chelyabinsk-70, and claimed it made the sale only because company officials didn't know the laboratory was involved in nuclear production.

Even more troubling was Reinsch's announcement last June that 47 supercomputers had been sold to China. Technical experts say these computers provide unprecedented technological capabilities to Beijing and are likely to become a key element in China's nuclear program. But when Reinsch was asked about this at a congressional hearing last November, he said there was no evidence any of the computers was being used for nuclear purposes. When pressed by Rep. Duncan Hunter on whether Commerce even knew where the computers were located, Reinsch bobbed and weaved until finally giving an answer that summed up the bankruptcy of the Clinton administration's export policy: "With respect to some of them, yes. With respect to all of them, not yet."

There's a simple reason Reinsch couldn't be more definitive: China won't allow American officials to conduct post-shipment verifications, designed to guarantee that materials exported from the United States are being used as promised. Thus Reinsch acknowledged last December—six months after learning about the 47 supercomputers sold to China—that "no formal post-shipment verifications have yet been requested." And now that another six months have passed, there's no evidence Commerce knows anything more about where the supercomputers are or how they're being used.

So what has the Clinton administration learned about the pitfalls of a permissive export-control policy? Apparently nothing. Consider this: The Defense Technology Security Administration—the agency charged with overseeing export controls for the Pentagon—is scheduled to be abolished this fall. Its successor agency will be moved within Defense to an acquisitions department that has traditionally been hostile to export controls. Even more ominous is a recent *Defense News* report that the Commerce Department is pushing to grant an export license for the sale of a high-temperature furnace, manufactured by a New Jersey-based company called Consarc, to a Chinese government agency. This sale—already approved in an interagency process—is all the more remarkable because the furnace will bolster Beijing's ability to produce nuclear warheads.

There's an interesting story behind the furnace. Consarc was all set to ship it to Iraq in 1990, one month before the invasion of Kuwait. The sale was blocked at the last minute by senior officials at the Pentagon and the National Security Council. Had it gone through, there's little doubt Saddam would have used it to bolster his arsenal. Clinton administration officials should have learned something from this. Short of a missile attack, what will wake them up? ♦

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The Armed Forces We Deserve

By Frederick W. Kagan

American defense policy is at a crossroads: Will we shape the future to produce a generally peaceful, prosperous world, or will we allow the international system to become increasingly perilous and chaotic? The former course entails an arduous process of global engagement and steady expenditure on national security. The latter course—continuing to cut our armed forces and reduce our commitments around the world—seems easier, but it will lead to the rise of new threats, instabilities, and wars.

During the Cold War, America's defense policy was relatively clear. The magnitude of Soviet power and the ubiquitous Communist threat provided reasons to remain committed globally and to expend resources on defense. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, security experts have been scanning the horizon for threats to replace the "evil empire" as the basis for our policy. But there are no such threats, and if we act wisely, there need be none soon. Wisdom, unfortunately, is in short supply.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, a succession of studies undertaken by Congress and by the Pentagon, from the Base Force Review of 1991 up through the National Defense Panel report of 1997, has failed to establish a wise framework for defense policy. Some of these reports, including the Base Force Review and the Bottom-Up Review, posit threats that are not ultimately credible; as a basis for policy, these studies are merely ineffective. But the others—reports like that of the National Defense Panel—which speak of the present relatively peaceful state of the world as a "strategic pause," are dangerous. They may well lure us down the path of irresponsibility. The truth is that a threat-based calculus of our defense needs simply is outmoded. We must look beyond the Cold War paradigm or put our future security at risk.

Yet the proper remedy is not far to seek. Alfred Thayer Mahan spelled it out a century ago in relation to seapower; today, as Lt. Col. David T. Fautua argues in a dissertation forthcoming from the University of North Carolina, Mahan's insight should be applied to all the services: A nation's armed forces exist to defend its interests, and those forces must be configured to that end. The military must be prepared to defend the nation's interests in times of peace as well as war; by supporting diplomacy as well as, when diplomacy fails, responding to threats. It may be that no military threats to the United States are discernible today, but America's interests have not faded, and it is the imperative of promoting and protecting those interests that should dictate our military requirements.

In this national-security model, the nation's interests cannot be defined narrowly or even as confidently as some would suggest. America has certain clear short-term interests, and other clear long-term interests. Beyond those, however, still other, unpredictable interests will take shape. Interests arise from the need for access to vital resources, from international treaty commitments, from commitments of friendship to states with similar political systems and worldviews, from humanitarian desires not to permit horrors to continue unimpeded, and even from the public statements of our leaders, who may pin America's prestige willy-nilly to some event in a far-off land. It is impossible to know what all our interests will be even five years into the future, just as it is impossible to know exactly what threats will develop.

In three regions—Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia—we have vital national interests, both general and specific, that are well established, rooted in history and in economic relationships. As a general matter, we must at all times maintain the security and stability of each of these regions, both internally and with regard to the rest of the world. Failure to do so in Europe, for example, would lead to the rearmament of Germany, which would be inherently destabilizing. However peaceable its intentions, a rearmed Germany would be by far the most powerful state in Europe and would be perceived as posing a threat to its neighbors. At a minimum, Germany's rearmament would lead to a general rearmament on the continent; the worst case has been seen already twice this century.

In Asia, similarly, stability and security allow Japan to continue effectively disarmed. Should stabili-

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ty falter and Japan's security be threatened, that state, too, would rearm. Again, we need not attribute any expansionist motives to the Japanese. We need only note that Japanese rearmament would threaten the security of states throughout the region, which in turn would almost certainly rearm. Arms races do not lead automatically to wars, but they do inevitably increase tensions. In addition, an arms race in Europe or the Far East would present the United States with an awful dilemma: Either we, too, would rearm simply to keep pace, or we would abandon our influence in those regions. That alternative will never be acceptable. From an economic standpoint, at least for the foreseeable future, the collapse or closure to us of East Asia or Europe would be calamitous. Nor could we afford to view with equanimity the possibility that a single state or coalition might harness the greater part of the economic and military potential of either region. Such a state or coalition might well be on the way to becoming a global competitor, a development that we should seek assiduously to prevent.

The situation in the Middle East is more complicated. Although the stakes are lower (even a regional hegemon could not compete with us as a peer), the threats are greater and more exigent. Discussions of the recent crisis in Iraq missed a basic point: The problem is not just Saddam Hussein or his weapons of mass destruction. Even more basic is the fact that an Iraq free of sanctions is so much more powerful than any of its neighbors to the west as to constitute a permanent threat to regional stability. This situation was held in check first by the Cold War, then by sanctions in the years following the Gulf War. When the sanctions are gone, only American power will stand between Iraq and regional hegemony. The point is not to focus on the threat that Iraq poses now, but to attend to our vital interest in keeping Iraq or any other state (such as Iran) from establishing hegemony.

Our vital interest in keeping these three regions stable and secure is clear. Failure would have repercussions around the world, which would reach our shores. The list of our interests does not end here, however. America must also maintain peace and stability in Central and, to a lesser extent, South America, and cannot ignore unrest in North Africa or South Asia because of those regions' links with the Middle East.

It is worth noting that threats to stability are already present in all of these regions. Continued instability in Afghanistan, for example, threatens the region because of the ways in which ethnicity, religion, and geography conflict with the existing borders. Mexico may have overcome its most ominous difficulties, and Nicaragua appears to be more stable than it was, but lulls between periods of upheaval are common in Latin America. In the Middle East and much of North Africa, too, the current quiescence may or may not continue. Nor have the strains associated with economic and political development been eliminated in these regions or in sub-Saharan Africa or South America. Causes of tension and conflict will continue.

But what, many ask, is America's interest in any of these troubles? Surely we have no vital interest in seeing to it that the states of Africa coexist peacefully, they say, or in interfering in disputes within the Muslim world. Some even question our need or our right to interfere in the affairs of Europe, the Middle East, and the Pacific Rim. The answer is that, in addition to whatever particular interests may crop up, we also have certain general, long-term interests that we evade only at great cost.

In the first place, America has an interest in a peaceful world where disputes are solved by diplomacy and compromise rather than by war. Such an orderly world will not exist unless we make it and maintain it, for it is not the normal order of things. If we withdraw from our commitment to maintain the peace, power vacuums will be created across the globe. Then not merely will aspiring regional hegemons seize the opportunity to expand, but—what is more likely and more dangerous—instabilities within key countries in regions we have abandoned will threaten or tempt their neighbors. If we are not present to contain the instabilities that arise, others will take our place—and their notions of containment are unlikely to match our notions of a peaceful world.

In the second place, there are powerful groups of people in the world who hate us, hate our social order, hate the way our values have spread throughout the world, frequently to the detriment of their own, and hate our economic predominance, however discreetly we assert it. As societies modernize, large groups of people are dispossessed; their old careers, ways of life, and values vanish. As the preeminent world power, the United States will probably continue to bear the brunt of the anger of such people. Even though we hate no one and aspire to no domination, we will continue to have determined enemies.

In the third place, we must remember that no other state's interests will ever fully coincide with our own. Even our staunchest allies diverge from us on important issues. Friendship and powerful common interests may have held us together, but this need not always be so, particularly if we stop pursuing our common interests. As long as we work in conjunction with

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major regional powers to maintain stability in their region, they are likely to remain our allies. But if we were to abandon, say, Europe or, worse still, East Asia, to its own devices, how long could we count on German or Japanese friendship? Even if those countries hewed to the political and diplomatic course they have followed for fifty years—which is by no means guaranteed—we could, by failing to assist them in securing their own interests, cause them to reflect upon the many ways in which their interests clash with ours. We might end up, through inaction, turning current friends into the very regional hegemons we seek to discourage.

This interests-based approach to national security has important implications for defense. Most basic is an intellectual reorientation: We must stop focusing on threats and start thinking in terms of the missions we may be called on to perform in order to secure our interests. Forward basing in Europe and East Asia, for instance, is less a prerequisite for meeting threats in those regions than it is a critical symbol of our commitment to take upon ourselves the maintenance of their security and stability. The force requirement in the Middle East, on the other hand, is not merely what is necessary to deter Saddam from invading his neighbors, but what is necessary to remove Saddam from power and replace him with a more stable regime, since that mission may well become central to securing our interests in the region.

Above all, since we must maintain stability in the regions vital to us, it is essential that our forces be well adapted to that purpose. Today, this is not the case. Consider, for example, the problem of rapid deployment. It has long been axiomatic that America must possess the ability to project decisive force anywhere in the world at short notice, and this requirement is now more pivotal than ever. Yet some obvious organizational and logistical features of our armed forces systematically impede rapid deployment.

Thus, in the Army, the basic organizational unit for supplies and support services is the division (about 20,000 men), while the basic unit for training is the brigade (about 5,000 men). Brigades are often deployed pursuant to the small-scale missions that are common now, but they lack their own supply system, and their departure disrupts the supply of the division they leave behind. A sensible remedy for this has been proposed: In *Breaking the Phalanx*, Col. Douglas MacGregor urges abolishing the division and making a brigade-sized "group" the basic unit for both training and deployment. But apparently no one is listening. Similarly, the development of a lightweight, fuel-efficient tank made of state-of-the-art high-strength materials would enormously facilitate the deployment of armored forces and therefore deserves priority. But the advanced-technology enthusiasts, for all their talk of a "revolution in military affairs," are so caught up in their vision of Information Age war, as they say it will be waged in 2020, that they completely overlook this immediate need.

The prophets of this revolution are unrealistic on several counts. They make a beguiling case that technology will usher in an era in which war is cheap, painless, and always won by the United States. The key challenge, as they see it, is to fund the technologies of the future; meanwhile, the present "strategic pause" between major struggles means that force structure can be safely cut. In fact, of course, there is no such thing as a strategic pause, any more than there is painless war. Our interests are never in abeyance. Nor can the weapons of 2020 be built now and grafted onto a 19th-century force structure. Even the most forward-looking change must be evolutionary, as new technologies, force structures, fighting techniques, and doctrines are continually adapted to serve the nation's actual needs.

To revamp our armed forces as required to defend our interests will cost a lot more than we are planning to pay, and no one knows how much. But we can afford it. Between 1970 and 1995, the United States spent an average of 5.5 percent of its gross domestic product on defense. At the end of that period, we were in the midst of one of the biggest economic booms in history—so defense spending did not break us. Yet today we are told that spending 3 percent of GDP on defense will hurt the economy, unbalance the budget, and starve vital programs. This claim is buttressed by the assertion that our responsibilities are lighter than they were during the Cold War.

The reality is that, far from being a "peaceful interlude," the present is a time of fateful choices for national-security policy. We must decide whether to rebuild our armed forces and assertively shape the international environment—or watch our weakness encourage the international situation to slip out of our control. If we undertake the technological innovations already needed, without being mesmerized by a potential revolution still ahead; if we adopt a force structure that allows us to defend our national interests now, and maintain the will to defend them, then the future will suit us. We can avert the rise of peer competitors, instability, and war in regions vital to us—on condition that we wake up to the gravity of the decisions we are making now. ♦

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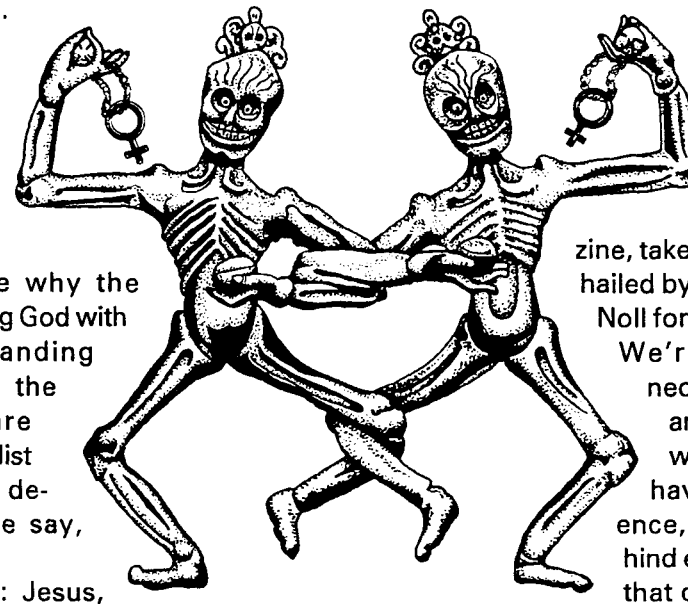
Does Jesus Have Two Mommies?

If, as Father Flake says, God is our *Mother*, then Jesus has two mommies and, presto, "gay *is* good."

The Mass is the consummation of the love of Christ (the Bridegroom) for His Bride (the Church), and the priest at the altar represents the Bridegroom. But if, as Sister Shrew insists, there ought to be *women priests*, then a woman can be a Bridegroom and, presto, "same-sex marriage" *is* legitimate.



So now you see why the people who are replacing God with a goddess and demanding priestesses are often the same people who are pushing the homosexualist agenda. The common denominator is, shall we say, sexual confusion.

But there's more: Jesus, who came down from Heaven and was therefore in a position to know with certainty, called God our *Father*. But if Jesus was wrong about this, and Fr. Flake knows better, then Jesus wasn't the Son of God, wasn't a member of any Trinity — indeed, was an impostor.

And if, as Sister Shrew is forever telling us, "sexism" is a sin, then Jesus *sinned* when He chose only males for His priesthood, and therefore could hardly be divine.

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Yes, there are those in the Church who, whether they realize it or not, are pushing for a return to the unholy trinity of paganism — goddesses, priestesses, and homosexuality. But there are others of us, from the Holy Father on down, who are determined to remain Catholic. So now you know why there's a civil war going on in the Church! The issue isn't "equal rights," but *God's rights*: Will God's revelation prevail in His Church?

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Achieving Richard Rorty

Leftist Thought in Middle-Class America

By David Brooks

Some people think we are in for a long era of Republican rule, others think the Democrats will return as the majority party, but Richard Rorty, America's most famous academic philosopher, predicts we are about to become a dictatorship.

The reactionary masses will soon become fed up with the spoiled overclass, he writes in his newly published series of lectures, *Achieving Our Country*, and they will install a militaristic strongman. This dictator "will quickly make his peace with the international super-rich, just as Hitler made his with the German industrialists. He will invoke the glorious memory of the Gulf War to provoke military adventures which will generate short-term prosperity." American culture will turn ugly: "The gains made in the past forty years by black and brown Americans, and by homosexuals, will be wiped out. Jocular contempt for women will come back into fashion. The words 'nigger' and 'kike' will once again be heard in the workplace."

There are many words that could be applied to this set of predictions—loopy, paranoid, idiotic—but I think the one that best captures Rorty is successful: Richard Rorty is the Bill Gates of the "attention economy," the stock market for seekers of publicity. For the past quarter century, he has put forward a series of subversive and outrageous statements that have generated endless debate. And, brilliantly, he has managed it without making a laughingstock of himself. On the contrary, he has become ever more respected, and in some quarters revered. In a subtle and fascinating trajectory, he has made himself what French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu would call a "consecrated radical."

David Brooks is a senior editor of The Weekly Standard.

Bourdieu provides the best lens through which to view Rorty. In a series of books with such titles as *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) and *Homo Academicus* (1984), Bourdieu's great aim has been to develop an economy of symbolic exchanges, to delineate the rules and patterns of the intellectual marketplace. His basic thesis is that all intellectuals enter the market with certain forms of capital. They may have such academic capital as the right degrees, such cultural capital as knowledge of a field or a feel for proper intellectual etiquette, or such linguistic capital as a skill with language.

Richard Rorty
Achieving Our Country
Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America
Harvard University Press,
144 pp., $18.95

Intellectuals spend their careers trying to augment their capital and convert their particular form of capital into other forms. One intellectual might attack the sacred figures in his field in order to win notoriety that can be converted into publishing contracts. Another might host a lecture series so he can suck up to the journal editors and other gatekeepers in his field. Bourdieu doesn't say these strategies are self-conscious or cynical, merely that intellectuals naturally respond to pressures by adjusting their thinking. In incredibly great detail—and incredibly turgid prose—Bourdieu describes the successive attitudes, positions, and strategies thinkers adopt to succeed.

Rorty is well suited to this sort of analysis because he has never even pretended to do what most intellectuals do: pursue truth or knowledge. Starting with his 1979 book, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty has dismissed the notion that there could be any such thing as truth, or some ultimate reality that people could hope to discover through reason.

Instead, he is a pragmatist, of sorts—a self-proclaimed follower of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. But these magisterial figures of American philosophy from 1870 to 1940 typically used "pragmatism" to mean that we should wait to see the practical, pragmatic consequences of an idea before judging whether the idea is true. Rorty insists that we never come to

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the point of being able to judge the truth of an idea—and so people should stick with whatever notions happen to work for them at the time.

Human beings, Rorty continues, are nothing more than "decentered webs" of notions, ideas, and perceptions contingent on the circumstances of their lives and the language games they happen to be playing at the time. We are who we are, but if the breaks had gone differently, we might be somebody else. So we shouldn't get too hyped up about the notions that happen to be sliding through our minds at any given moment.

If that's your view, it would be silly to hold tenaciously to positions that do you harm. If you're going to be a pragmatist about the world, you might as well be pragmatic about your career. So while philosophers have always sought to refute Rorty's books on logical grounds, they might have done better to judge whether his ideas work for him. And the inescapable conclusion is that they do. Rorty has held some of the finest academic appointments in America (he is leaving the University of Virginia for the sunny confines of Stanford next fall), he is widely quoted and endlessly debated. In an academic world in which the person who sits on the best panels wins, Rorty is the undisputed champion.

If we look at Rorty's marketing strategy from Bourdieu's perspective, the first thing to notice is that he has adopted what might be called the "Tu-Quoque Strategy"—a way of avoiding having to give specific answers by accusing his opponents of failing to give specific answers, a way of seizing the high ground by accusing his opponents of failing to do what he himself fails to do.

So, for example, the purported aim of *Achieving Our Country* is to castigate the political Left in America for being too interested in theory and not interested enough in practical politics. "Leftists in the academy have permitted cultural politics to supplant real politics," he writes, "and have collaborated with the Right in making cultural issues central to public debate." Rorty, by contrast, says he wants a Left that proposes pragmatic political initiatives.

Of course, if he really believed this, he would have written a book of practical initiatives. But then he would be just another policy wonk with a book of proposals. And so *Achieving Our Country* contains not even one sentence of practical political or public-policy advice. Indeed, Rorty appears blissfully ignorant about such matters. Instead he has written a book to promulgate the theory that there's too much talk about theory on the Left in America—not bothering to mention how much of that talk (particularly in the non-philosophical forms in which it appears in English, history, and political-science departments across the country) claims Rorty as its prophet and *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* as its scripture.

WHILE HE APPEARS RADICAL, RORTY IS THE NORMAN ROCKWELL OF THE INTELLECTUAL BOURGEOISIE.

Rorty's second strategy has been to position himself as a pseudo-deviant. He attaches himself to the dominant strain of intellectual thought (at least in his milieu) while at the same time claiming to deviate from it in an attention-getting way. In philosophy, he is a relativist who claims to deviate from "true" relativism. And in *Achieving Our Country*, he declares himself a man of the Left who prefers 1930s leftism to the 1960s leftism that is the dominant strain in academia. This allows him to make a series of assertions in the tone of someone bravely going against the grain—while at the same time not actually saying anything one of his readers could get angry about.

This strategy lets him write of the Cold War, for example, "I am still unable to see much difference between fighting Hitler and fighting Stalin"—as though there were hordes of powerful Stalin apologists ready to jump on him for this heresy (and implying, with that lovely word "still," that he routinely compared the Communists to the Nazis back before the fall of communism).

But even more important, this "pseudo-deviant" strategy allows him to criticize members of the 1960s Left in a way they can all agree with. First, he depicts an America in which there are only sadistic elites and oppressed workers—and standing between them, a small minority of humane academics. He thus draws his readers into a charmed and smug circle. He then proceeds to slap them with a feather. He argues that the problem with the members of the New Left is that they don't love America enough. But he doesn't insist they should love the actual America (which would seem vaguely conservative and therefore truly deviationist). He just says they should love the ideals of America, an anodyne notion if ever there was one. Thus he can portray himself as a critic of his colleagues while actually saying nothing that would truly offend them: perfect pseudo-deviationism.

Meanwhile, he ignores the Right (who are so far outside his milieu that they would never bother to respond to whatever he might say), and also the politicians, unions, and activists of the practical Left (who are also beyond his professional orbit and therefore of no interest).

Rorty's third strategy is genial iconoclasm. Throughout his career, Rorty has been vehemently anti-religious. His ideal society, he says, would be one in which "no trace of divinity remained, either in the form of a divinized world or a divinized self." In the society he envisions nobody would look to God for rules

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to live by. Nobody would seek meaning in any sort of transcendent realm. Nobody would entertain thoughts about the infinite. No religion. No metaphysics. Just you and me.

In *Achieving Our Country*, Rorty cites Whitman—*And I call to mankind, Be not curious about God, / For I who am curious about each am not curious about God*—and he praises Whitman and Dewey because they tried to create a vocabulary that dispenses with the notion of sin. Dewey, Rorty explains, "repudiated the idea of sin as an explanation for tragedy."

Renouncing religion is not exactly cutting edge in academic circles these days. But Rorty's innovation is that he's so happy about it. There's no gloomy peering into the abyss for Rorty, or moaning about the meaninglessness of existence. Getting rid of religion is for him like getting out of a bad relationship; it's a chance to date more people. Rorty advises readers to be intellectually promiscuous, to try out and surf through all the different ideas out there—to expand yourself limitlessly.

While this stuff appears radical, if you strip away Rorty's grand declarations about the death of God and Truth and get down to the type of public personality that Rorty calls for, he begins to appear instead as the Norman Rockwell for the intellectual bourgeoisie in the age of the booming stock market. Rorty's ideal person doesn't go inventing troubles or take himself too seriously. The Rortyian—perhaps we should call him the Rortyarian—steps lightly. He cherishes civility and openness. He won't judge others harshly, and if he hates anybody at all, it will be those people who make the arrogant assumption that they are in a position to judge. He is also deeply concerned about cruelty (Rorty comes back to cruelty again and again in his writing). Absent eternal principles and truths, suffering becomes the primary, maybe the only, moral fact. Old-fashioned types who really believe in transcendent truth will be cruel for the sake of some higher principle—punishing people for the sake of justice—but in the Rortyarian world the suffering of the person being punished looms large while the lofty principle fades into insignificance as just another contingency. This worldview faithfully mirrors that of the suburban upper middle class.

Rorty is so esteemed because while seeming radical he articulates sentiments that are mainstream in his milieu. He probably couldn't have planned such a delicate balance. Such other consecrated radicals as Oliver Stone or Spike Lee or Norman Mailer have fallen one way or another, either by slipping off into real deviance instead of pseudo-deviance or by tilting too far in a commercial direction and so losing some radical status. Rorty hasn't. He may not have achieved our country, but he certainly has achieved success. ♦

THE VANISHING FRONTIER

Cormac McCarthy Concludes the Border Trilogy

By Woody West

Cormac McCarthy is an odd duck in the literary pond. He appears on no literary panels, sits on none of the bookish juries that parcel out prestige, and is not given to signing petitions to save the sardines. More notoriously, he avoids the press. McCarthy is a novelist who sticks to his lathe—not a canny career strategy in a time when literary reputation is merchandised like deodorant.

Cormac McCarthy
Cities of the Plain
Knopf, 304 pp., $24

Before the first book in his Border Trilogy, *All the Pretty Horses*, was awarded both the National Book Award and National Book Critics Circle Award in 1992, McCarthy was pretty much academic fodder. He's the subject of at least three of those thin volumes of essays usually edited by English professors. His first five novels—*The Orchard Keeper* (1965), *Outer Dark* (1968), *Child of God* (1973), *Suttree* (1979), and *Blood Meridian* (1985)—were not the sort to be selected by the Book of the Month Club. *Child of God*, for example, is an appalling and darkly comic story of a backwoods necrophiliac. *Blood Meridian* is a harrowing allegorical tale of a band of Indian scalphunters and their satanic leader, perhaps even the Devil himself.

Those books established McCarthy's reputation as a writer of stunning energy, but bleak and brutal enough to make the most devoted follower of Hobbes seem sunny. Saul Bellow, a member of the committee that chose McCarthy in 1981 for one of the MacArthur Foundation "genius grants," noted the "absolutely overpowering use of language, his life-giving and death-dealing sentences."

Nonetheless, it was not until he began the Border Trilogy—with its more traditional narrative than that found in his earlier books—that McCarthy obtained a popular audience to match his critical reputation. *The Crossing* (1994), the trilogy's second novel, was admiringly reviewed, and his latest work, *Cities of the Plain*, now concludes the sequence.

Woody West is associate editor of the Washington Times.

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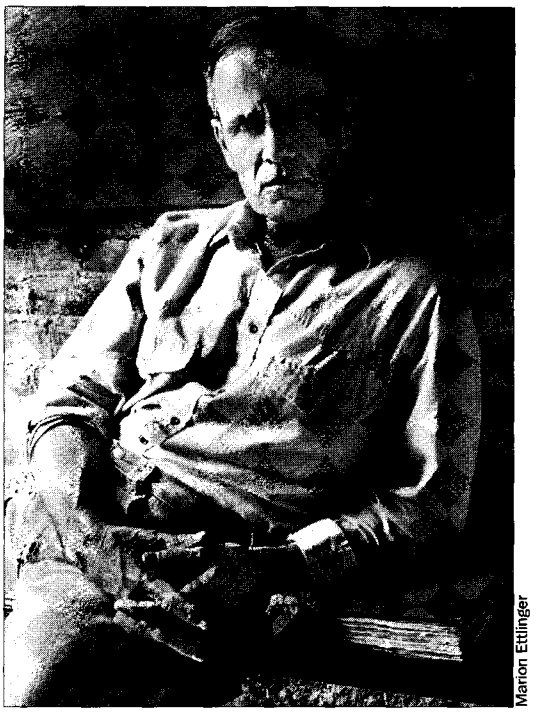
McCarthy's canvas is the raw landscape of the American Southwest and Mexico. In *Cities of the Plain*, the principal characters of each of the two previous novels return, their violent histories similar but separated by a generation. John Grady Cole is a young man; Billy Parham is his older friend. Both are cowboys, between World War II and the Korean War, at a ranch just across the Rio Grande, not far from El Paso and Juarez—the cities of the plain on which the plot pivots.

The traditional way of western life on the ranch that has endured into the 1950s is less anachronism than relic—as are John Grady and Billy. A portion of the ranch has recently been taken by the army for a new base and the remainder is likely to be absorbed by the government.

The elderly patriarch of the ranch, now slipping toward senility, ruminates one evening on the porch as John Grady sits with him:

> The day after my fiftieth birthday in March of nineteen and seventeen I rode into the old headquarters at the Wilde well and there was six dead wolves hangin on the fence. I rode along the fence and ran my hand along em. I looked at their eyes. A government trapper had brought em in the night before. Theyd been killed with poison bait. Strychnine. Whatever. Up in the Sacramentos. A week later he brought in four more. I aint heard a wolf in this country since. I suppose thats a good thing. They can be hell on stock. But I guess I was always what you might call superstitious. I know I damn sure wasnt religious. And it had always seemed to me that somethin can live and die but that the kind of thing that they were was always there. I didnt know you could poison that. I aint heard a wolf howl in thirty odd years. I dont know where youd go to hear one. There may not be any such a place.

That reminiscence defines the theme of *Cities of the Plain* and its two predecessors. McCarthy is a compelling blend of romantic and realist, hard-edged in both. He also trafficks at the edges of the mythic (though less so in this final novel than in *The Crossing*). His ear and eye are superb. McCarthy builds his characters from daily existence in a place where the odds are always barely even. And he knows so many things: about horses and dogs and the way work is done. He has a nonpareil ability to convey the gritty life on a marginal ranch—as in his remarkable description of the pursuit on horseback and destruction of a pack of wild dogs that have been preying on calves.


Marion Ettlinger

Cormac McCarthy

McCarthy is often critically compared to William Faulkner. That's facile, but it has a marginal usefulness. The comparison is applicable at least to each writer's ability to inhabit the past vividly and to their shared vision of—as Faulkner puts it in *The Hamlet*—the "doomed and damned fragility of human conditions."

The plot of *Cities of the Plain* is rudimentary, like most of McCarthy's plots. They are merely the right-of-way along which his locomotive speeds. In a Juarez bar with Bill Parham and other ranch hands, John Grady notices a teenage prostitute and is profoundly smitten. He returns several times unsuccessfully seeking her. He is able to learn that she's in a pricey brothel outside of town, having been purchased several years before from her parents in Chiapas. Eventually, Magdalena returns his love.

John Grady draws advance wages, sells his horse, his saddle, and pawns the pistol his grandfather left him so he can try to rescue her from the whorehouse, marry, and set up housekeeping in an old adobe house he has repaired in the hills. The small problem is that Eduardo, the thoroughly vicious pimp (McCarthy's villains are unrelentingly nasty), also has decided to marry her and refuses to sell her to the young ranch hand.

Billy, as a surrogate older brother or father to John Grady, visits Eduardo to see if something can be worked out. But the pimp, after listening to Billy's description of the situation, replies, "What is wrong with this story is that it is not a true story. Men have in their minds a picture of how the world will be. How they will be in that world. The world may be many different ways for them but there is one world that will never be and that is the world they dream of."

When Billy reckons that some men get what they want, the pimp continues, "No man. Or perhaps only briefly so as to lose it. Or perhaps only to prove to the dreamer that the world of his longing made real is no longer that world at all."

Billy Parham and John Grady Cole, in parallel experiences on both sides of the border, have survived in unforgiving country where weakness is often lethal. Billy, however, as the older, has come to accept the obdurate chanciness of the event. Not so John Grady. Billy tries to persuade the younger man of the futility of his

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plan to rescue Magdalena. "'Theres a difference between quittin and knowin when youre beat. . . . I guess you dont believe that.' 'No,' he said. 'I guess I dont.'"

The word "Border" in the title of the trilogy holds various meanings. It denotes the contrasting cultures of the United States and Mexico that are intricately woven into the three novels. It means the border between hope and illusion, between aspiration and the perversity of how events defeat or deflate hope. Mostly, "Border" refers to the line between what was and what is—the irreparable subtractions of life: "The world past, the world to come. Their common transcencies. Above all a knowing deep in the bone that beauty and loss are one."

A gritty and stunningly written climax swiftly follows, consistent with the fatalism that pervades all of Cormac McCarthy's haunting tales. And yet, as embedded as fatalism is in McCarthy's fiction, there is a more compelling quality in his work. And that is his belief that the individual must not acquiesce, no matter the odds, no matter how stacked the deck against intentions. To endure in a course of action once chosen is a defining characteristic of McCarthy protagonists.

Not all that long ago, this trait would have been called "manliness"—which points to another noticeable feature of the trilogy: Women occasionally appear, and not just as lace and curls; but when they do appear, they are never central to the narrative. Readers will judge this as they will. But McCarthy's virtue as a writer derives from his keen observation of the land and its creatures and his incisive sense of individuals contending in a universe not inclined to accommodate them. ♦

GUNNING DOWN CRIME

The Statistics of Concealed Weapons

By Nelson Lund

For thirty years, crime and guns have been among the most hotly disputed and politically potent issues in America. Not surprisingly, slogans and anecdotes have been the principal ammunition. When empirical evidence has been allowed at all into debates about gun control, it has been notable mostly for its crudity. Proponents of gun control never tire of praising the low murder rates in Japan and Great Britain (which tightly restrict civilian access to firearms), while their opponents are equally tireless in pointing out the low murder rates in Switzerland and Israel (where gun ownership is widespread).

John R. Lott Jr.
More Guns, Less Crime
Understanding Crime and Gun Control Laws
University of Chicago Press, 232 pp., $23

With few exceptions, academic studies of gun control have barely exceeded the quality of the sound bites fired off by warring interest groups. John R. Lott Jr., an economist who specializes in measuring the effects of legal rules, has now published the results of empirical research that is much more detailed and far more sophisticated. Indeed, Lott has gone so far beyond other scholars that his work deserves a central place both in future academic inquiry and in popular and political debate. Unfortunately, Lott's book may not get its due.

As the title suggests, *More Guns, Less Crime* concludes that the proliferation of firearms among the civilian population has good effects. Lott shows that giving ordinary citizens the freedom to carry concealed weapons in public is followed by reductions in such crimes as murder, rape, and robbery. This conclusion should come as no surprise, though the media reacted to its initial announcement as though Lott had claimed to find an exception to the law of gravity. But what does seem surprising is how dramatically crime rates fall when laws regulating concealed weapons are liberalized. This finding has profound implications for public policy, and the real importance of Lott's book lies in the extraordinary care and objectivity with which he comes to his conclusions.

The thesis that guns lessen crime is plausible, but not self-evident. And even if it is true, legislators and policy analysts need to know how much harm is done by laws that forbid the carrying of arms. Lott's research, which applies sophisticated statistical analysis to an unusually large and high-quality set of data, provides estimates of the magnitude of the harm caused by certain forms of gun control.

In evaluating Lott's study of the correlation between changes in gun laws and changes in crime rates—and his conclusion that liberalizing concealed-carry laws has strong deterrent effects on violent crimes—it is important to note that no such study can ever be definitive. The first reason is that such a correlation can never conclusively establish causation: Even a perfect correlation between roosters crowing and the sun rising wouldn't prove that roosters cause the sun to rise—just as it wouldn't prove that the rising sun causes roosters to crow, for the data leave

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open the possibility that other factors are causing both the crowing and the rising. Statistical relations are informative only to the extent that they tend to confirm or falsify a theory of causation.

The second reason such studies can never be definitive is that perfect data sets do not exist. Testing a new drug on a hundred patients for five years might indicate whether the drug lacks significant adverse side effects, but a study of a thousand patients over twenty years would necessarily produce a more reliable indication, and a thirty-year study of a hundred thousand patients would be better still.

And yet, although such research can never claim finality, Lott's results are unusually powerful. The theory of causation that he tests is simple and plausible: Making crime riskier reduces the likelihood that crimes will be committed. Just as we would expect burglar alarms and guard dogs to reduce the incidence of burglaries, so should we expect an increase in the number of potential victims who are armed to reduce the incidence of violent crimes. So too, Lott's data cover more than three thousand jurisdictions over a period of eighteen years, which provides him with many more observations than used in previous studies. And finally, Lott has been extremely industrious, imaginative, and scrupulous in performing statistical tests designed to control for factors other than changes in concealed-carry laws that might influence crime rates.

The data show what one should expect: States that liberalize their concealed-carry laws experience an immediate reduction in violent crime, which increases over time as more citizens obtain permits to carry weapons. These effects, moreover, are most pronounced in densely populated urban areas. The groups that benefit most from liberalization are those (like black Americans) who are most at risk of being victimized by violent crime, and those (like women) who are least able to defend themselves by means other than firearms.

Lott's most striking findings concern the magnitude of these effects. Using a variety of alternative-estimation techniques, he concludes that nationwide liberalization of concealed-carry laws in 1992 would have prevented 1,400-1,800 murders, 3,700-4,800 rapes, and 60,000-94,000 aggravated assaults in that year alone. Based on government calculations of the costs of various crimes (and using jury verdicts as a measure of pain and suffering), the nation would have saved somewhere between $5.7 billion and $8.3 billion in 1992. No such effects were associated with gun-control measures like waiting periods and background checks, which appear to have no effect or even to increase violent crime.

LOTT HAS ALREADY BEEN SUBJECTED TO A VICIOUS CAMPAIGN OF LIES AND DISTORTIONS.

The beneficial effects of liberalizing the concealed-carry laws far outweigh their costs. Permit holders almost never misuse their guns (either intentionally or by accident), and they pay the direct costs through licensing fees and purchases of their own guns and training. In return for these relatively small costs (at most a few hundred dollars for each permit holder), each permit creates a deterrent effect that saves society something like $3,000-$5,000, plus any unmeasured benefits such as a greater sense of safety and peacefulness. Even taking account of evidence that some criminals substitute crimes of stealth (like burglary) for crimes of violence (like robbery) and that some criminals migrate to jurisdictions that forbid their citizens to carry guns, concealed-carry permits remain the most cost effective crime-control measure ever studied. Such laws are cheaper than increased law enforcement or incarceration, and they do not rely on tax dollars.

These findings should change the course of political debate over crime and gun control. But they probably won't. One reason is that *More Guns, Less Crime* is not well written. The book's core is based on a technical paper previously published in an academic journal, and Lott's new effort to make his argument accessible to a more general audience is half-hearted and incomplete. Despite the addition of anecdotes and some attempt to explain the statistical techniques he has used, Lott has buried many of his most important findings in long stretches of academic prose. Those discussions, in turn, offer an odd mélange of technically imprecise formulations (which are corrected in the endnotes and appendixes) and unexplained technical terminology that will be incomprehensible to those without a background in statistics. Lott's book needed a literate and demanding editor.

But a more significant reason for fearing that Lott's book will have little real impact is that its conclusions are anathema to most opinion leaders in the media. Lott himself has already been subjected to a vicious campaign of lies and distortions suggesting that his research was paid for by the firearms industry. After attempting to prevent his original academic study from receiving any publicity at all, gun-control advocates have made spurious claims about flaws in the study, and a number of prominent academics have chimed in with phony objections that can be based only on stupidity or bad faith. In his new book-length treatment, Lott devotes a chapter to patiently and calmly refuting his critics, but the mere existence of so much opposition will leave commentators free to treat his work as "controversial" and "dubious." Expect them to do just that. ♦

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COURTING DISASTER

The Life and Death of Basketball Legend Earl 'The Goat' Manigault

By Jonathan V. Last

Two years ago, on a hot August night, I was sitting in a car across from Roosevelt Park in Queens while Ron Naclerio explained, "The worst they can do is put a bullet in you. If anything breaks out and you hear shots, just get down on your stomach."

Naclerio had brought me there to see a game—the best basketball game in New York. It was a professional game, of sorts, most of the players paid by local drug lords eager to enhance their reputations and spend a night betting thousands of dollars on their teams. On court were several recent graduates of Division I colleges, others who would have played Division I had they been able to stay in school, and one boy, Lamar Odom, who at age sixteen was 6 feet 9 inches tall and already nicknamed "The Franchise."

Naclerio, my host in the underworld of New York City basketball, is the coach of the Cardozo High School boys' basketball team, the editor of the *Hoop Scoop* newsletter, and the man who discovered the now-professional superstar Stephon Marbury when he was in the sixth grade. That makes Naclerio a combination of talent scout, pimp, and kingmaker in the shadow world of playground basketball. It also makes him part of a phenomenon that is helping destroy inner-city children.

AP Photo/FILE

Chris Ballard
Hoops Nation
A Guide to America's Best Pickup Basketball
Owl, 367 pp., $12.95

Lars Anderson and Chad Millman
Pickup Artists
Street Basketball in America
Verso, 203 pp., $25

Basketball is divided into two worlds—one of battered playgrounds, the other of multi-million-dollar arenas; one of drug money, the other of shoe contracts; one of myth, the other of fame. The two worlds overlap a little, and a few young players have a chance to move from the first to the second. But their opportunities disappear very quickly as they get older.

The world most people know is the National Basketball Association. The NBA has gone from being a barnstorming sideshow to a slickly packaged showcase for the world's most popular sport in just fifty years. Most of the players in the NBA today have traveled the same path: Discovered in grade school by men like Naclerio, they are shepherded into basketball clubs with other promising youngsters. These clubs, sponsored by sneaker companies, pay the tuition at private high schools for the most talented players, the best of whom go on to play at Division I colleges, again on full scholarship. The best of those college players are then drafted into the NBA, where they can expect to spend an average of 3.75 years and make an average yearly salary of $1.7 million.

The other, much larger, world is the subject of two new books: *Hoops Nation: A Guide to America's Best Pickup Basketball*, by Chris Ballard, and *Pickup Artists: Street Basketball in America*, by Lars Anderson and Chad Millman. This alternative world also begins with talented boys signed to clubs to develop their skills. But some boys prove unable to handle even the reduced academic work expected of athletes and lose their scholarships. Kicked back to public schools, surrounded by the daily calamity of life in the inner city, these kids neglect their schoolwork, fall in with the wrong people, get involved with drugs. Many drop out before graduation, and those who do graduate go on to "juco"—junior college, the last resort for troubled ballplayers. Despite the promise of a chance at a Division I program after two years, most linger only a few months before returning to the city. Then they go to the only place left for them to play basketball: the playground.

Professional basketball differs from other professional sports in two ways. First, the factors that determine whether a player makes it are rarely physical. Professional-caliber players can be found on almost every competitive playground in America. What separates those in the NBA from those on the streets isn't their jump shots, but their heads. A handful of players—Allen Iverson, Latrell Sprewell, Anthony Mason—are so talented that they play professionally despite their behavioral difficulties. But with the exception of the very

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top echelon of NBA stars, intellectual ability and emotional stability are all that separate the millionaires from those on the street.

Second, unlike baseball, where the stature of a player is based on his statistics, or football, where a player is defined by the number of championships won, basketball ranks its players almost entirely by their moves. Where other major sports deal in permanence, basketball is based on the fleeting: Unearthly dunks or impossible passes are the equivalent of slugging averages and Super Bowl rings, meaning that playground players have a chance to become legends alongside their NBA counterparts.

As a result, some of the greatest basketball players never spent a minute in the NBA—and some of the best basketball is, and always has been, played on the street.

Every few years, there appears a sudden clump of books and movies about playground basketball. Pete Axthelm's *The City Game* (1970), Rick Telander's *Heaven Is a Playground* (1976), and Jim Carroll's nefarious *The Basketball Diaries* (1978) were seminal works and the first real recognition of the playground. Interest revived with Darcy Frey's *The Last Shot* in 1994 and a spate of movies: in 1992, *White Men Can't Jump*; in 1994, the Oscar-nominated documentary *Hoop Dreams;* in 1995, the movie version of *The Basketball Diaries*, starring Leonardo DiCaprio; in 1996, the HBO documentary *Rebound: The Legend of Earl 'The Goat' Manigault*; and this spring, Spike Lee's *He Got Game*.

Unfortunately, the two recent books on the topic are inferior additions to this flood of 1990s coverage. Ballard's *Hoops Nation* is a Michelin Guide for basketball players. He rates and describes basketball courts across the country and tries to make it seem a book by adding snippets of his travel diary as well as simple-minded bluster about the character of street basketball. Ballard is at his best when he catalogues courts and recreation centers, providing interesting information for travelers who want to play a little basketball. His problem comes when he tries to talk about the game—for he has little grasp of its history, and his desperate attempts to use "authentic" court language sound false and forced.

Kevin Chadwick

Anderson and Millman's *Pickup Artists* is more of a history, chronicling the street game from its origins in 1918. Requiring little space and less equipment, basketball has always been a city game, and so from the beginning it has been played by the ethnic groups that filled the ghettos. Until the late 1940s, playground basketball was ruled by the likes of Ralph and Danny Kaplowitz, Sheky Gotthoffer, Eddie Gottlieb, Dutch Garfinkle, and Sonny Herzberg. As the Jews began to flee the city, blacks moved in and quickly took over the game.

In the 1960s, the New York playground scene was dominated by Earl "The Goat" Manigault. In the ten years he played basketball, from age twelve to twenty-two, Manigault created a powerful legend. Just over six feet tall, he once dunked over Lew Alcindor (the legendary seven-foot center from a New York high-school who led UCLA to three national collegiate championships and, after changing his name to Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, had one of the longest, most productive careers in the history of the NBA). Manigault is the only person ever to perform a double-dunk, and his greatest regret was never being able to perfect sitting on the rim after a dunk, something he decided to try because he noticed that during dunks, "my waist would be hovering near the rim." At twenty-two—after a brief and failed attempt to manage college life at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina—he became addicted to heroin and never played seriously again.

Joe Hammond was the next superstar of the street game. During a summer-league game in 1970, Hammond scored fifty points in one half while being guarded by Julius Erving. He had to do it in one half, because he couldn't be bothered to show up until halftime—which is why Julius Erving is a now-retired NBA legend worth millions of dollars, and Joe Hammond is not. Drafted by the Los Angeles Lakers, Hammond served two terms in prison on drug charges and never played a game in the pros.

While Anderson and Millman provide an interesting if cursory history of the game, they fail to address

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the most important question we must ask about the sport: What role has basketball really played in the inner-city?

Some commentators argue that the culture of basketball has helped at-risk youth by keeping them out of trouble and giving them something to which they can dedicate themselves. Richard Lapchick of Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sport in Society points out that the college graduation rate for black male college basketball players, 38 percent, is higher than the graduation rate for all black male students, 34 percent. In his book, *Sport in Society: Equal Opportunity or Business As Usual?*, Lapchick cites a survey of black high-school student athletes, who said overwhelmingly that they felt their lives were better off because of their participation in sports.

There is, however, considerable evidence to suggest those kids are mistaken. In 1992, the Department of Education released a survey showing that 30 percent of high-school basketball players leave school functionally illiterate. The graduation rate for black basketball players, though higher than that for all black male students, lags significantly behind the 56 percent graduation rate for all students.

Even more alarming is a 1997 survey, also from the Center for the Study of Sport in Society, which shows that 66 percent of black males between thirteen and eighteen believe that they can one day make their livings as professional athletes. This is the reason, one supposes, that playground courts in New York have their three-point lines drawn at NBA distance, not the shorter high-school and college distance.

Of course, there are only 306 Division I basketball programs in America, and even if the programs had all twelve players on full scholarship—which they don't—that would produce only 3,672 college scholarships. Of those athletes, at most fifty-eight are drafted into the NBA each year. Not 66 percent, but 0.01 percent of high-school basketball players actually make the NBA.

But the dream of basketball stardom isn't about reality; it's the fantasy of a cosmic lottery. How could poor kids from broken homes who go to violent, dysfunctional schools not want to believe—seeing an NBA that is 79 percent black, watching highlight films on ESPN and Nike ads with Penny Hardaway, reading articles in the *Washington Post* about the wealth of teenaged Tracy McGrady who went pro right after high school, and listening to coaches who paint the picture of the dream. "The promise being held out there is that this is the escape route," argues sportswriter John Feinstein, author of such basketball classics as *A March to Madness*, *A Season on the Brink*, and *A Season Inside*.

BY AGE EIGHTEEN, THOSE WHO ARE GOING TO MAKE IT HAVE; THOSE WHO HAVEN'T AREN'T GOING TO.

So instead of working hard to get good grades and mustering the emotional capital needed to stay away from trouble, these kids play basketball. It may temporarily keep them away from danger, as Lapchick claims, but they aren't helping themselves in the long run by pursuing it at the expense of school. Lotteries always draw from the pool of those who can least afford to play. In the urban wasteland, even the brightest and most stable children have to struggle to lift themselves out of the ghetto—meaning that an average child who throws all his energy into a sport has almost no chance.

The fact is that basketball has contributed its full share to the destruction of possibilities for black middle-class life. Coming from a world apparently limited to either extreme poverty or extreme wealth, young inner-city men never seem to realize that most people count success as making $40,000 a year and moving to a small house in the suburbs. For a thirteen-year-old, low-income black boy with talent, there is a fleeting window of opportunity where if he concentrates on school and ignores the mirage of wealth, he has a chance at college—and the education that can give him a running start on the road to middle-class living.

That window, so small to begin with, shrinks with each year a kid falls behind in school, develops bad habits, and stays on the street. By age seventeen or eighteen, the window is shut: Those who are going to make it have; those who haven't aren't going to.

All the while, the NBA, the shoe companies, the *Washington Post*, ESPN, and particularly the Ron Naclerios of the world perpetuate a delusion. Like gambling commissions running ads for state lotteries that promise the poor their ship is coming in—like crack dealers promising a good high, for that matter—they are selling expensive and destructive dreams to young people caught in the throes of a social nightmare.

And then, when those players are in their twenties, they find themselves back where they started—on the playground. The best street players will have their legend, just like the ones who made it professionally, but not much else.

"I'm fifty-two, I feel like I'm a hundred," The Goat said. "The way I figure it, I'm just lucky to be alive, lucky to still be on the playground." All that talent, the chance to escape, gone. Two weeks ago, on May 14, Earl Manigault died of congestive heart failure at age fifty-three, his health ruined by too many late nights, too many drugs, too much basketball. That's the kind of luck tomorrow's players could do without. ♦

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Date	Day	Ports of Call	Arrive	Depart
Dec. 6	Sun	Ft. Lauderdale, FL		5:00PM
Dec. 7	Mon	At Sea/ *The Nation* Seminars		
Dec. 8	Tue	At Sea/ *The Nation* Seminars		
Dec. 9	Wed	Basseterre, St. Kitts	8:00AM	10:00PM
Dec. 10	Thu	St. John, USVI (tour drop-off)	7:00AM	7:30AM
Dec. 10	Thu	St. Thomas, USVI	8:30AM	5:00PM
Dec. 11	Fri	At Sea/ *The Nation* Seminars		
Dec. 12	Sat	Half Moon Cay, Bahamas*	8:00AM	5:00PM
Dec. 13	Sun	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	8:00AM	

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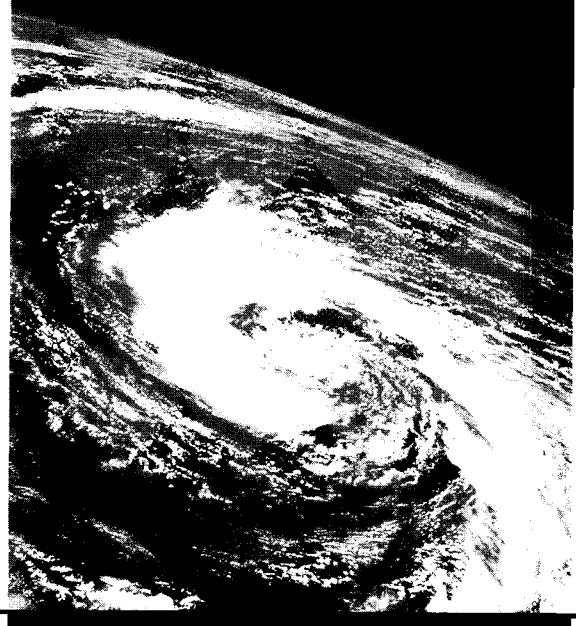

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We believe we must address one of the major challenges of the 21st Century: responding to global climate change while maintaining economic growth. We are working together through the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, as members of its Business Environmental Leadership Council to educate the public in the U.S. and abroad, conduct studies and policy analyses and increase international understanding.

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Second, businesses can and should take concrete steps now in the U.S. and abroad to assess their opportunities for emission reductions, establish and meet their emission reduction objectives, and invest in new, more efficient products, practices and technologies.

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